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THE
PASTORAL OFFICE:

ITS

DUTIES, DIFFICULTIES, PRIVILEGES,
AND PROSPECTS.

BY THE
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COMMUNICANT," ETC.



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I FEEL that it would be a presumption in me to send forth this Book, without a word or two of preface, by way of introducing it to my Ministerial Brethren, and those who are seeking admission into holy Orders..

There have been so many works written on the Christian Ministry, well calculated to inform the minds, to guide the actions, and to elevate the hearts, of those who are called to be Shepherds and Watchmen in the English Church, that the addition of *another* would scarcely seem desirable. Without, however, attempting to supply any deficiency on the part of those who have preceded me, I have felt that, since new wants are ever springing up in the Church, an ample field is still open

to those writers who humbly desire to meet them. I have*also felt a hope that by a work such as this, of an unpretending and popular stamp, I might perhaps give a helping hand to my fellow-laborers, and especially to my younger brethren, who from various causes may be debarred from the perusal of a more elaborate treatise.

It will be seen that I have avoided touching upon points of controversy; and have chiefly confined myself to those of a practical and personal nature; wishing rather to give a healthy tone to the feelings of my brethren, than to act as their guide in matters of doctrine and of ritual.

In a work so circumscribed as the present, the writer must of necessity chiefly confine himself to those duties which more immediately belong to the Pastor's office. I have, therefore, scarcely touched on those many opportunities which are afforded him of daily endeavoring to sanctify common life, and leaven the circle in which he moves; or on those social joys which our Church

happily recognizes as compatible with his consecrated character.

I have entered at some length on the subject of preaching; both because I strongly feel its importance, and also because our Church has of late, whether justly or unjustly, been charged with a deficiency on this head.

It may be thought that I have taken a somewhat high standard of ministerial requirement. Could I do otherwise? Although painfully conscious of personal shortcomings, I dared not lower the standard, either to excuse myself, or to meet the views of those who regard the ministry as involving any thing short of entire self-dedication to Christ. No; I feel that if an angel could speak to us of the duties and demands of our high calling, it would be to paint them in far stronger colors than my feeble pen has attempted. And deeply persuaded am I, that if we would raise our Church in the estimation of her members, and of the world at large, we must each one

of us endeavor to approve ourselves to God and to His people, by an increased zeal and earnestness in our sacred calling.

Neither let it be inferred from any thing in these pages that I would dispense with a high degree of holiness in the Christian *Layman*. Whatever is the object of attainment of the Church's *Ministers*, such also should be the aim of her private *Members*. Still, it must be admitted that a *double* obligation lies upon those who are called to be Leaders and Shepherds of the flock of Christ.

Should there be any thing here stated which may seem to discourage one earnest, but timid, servant of Christ, and lead him to exclaim, "Who then is sufficient for these things?" I would remind him that there is a strength promised—a strength which can more than supply all his need; and there is a joy set before him in his heavenly enterprise, of which none can know the calm and blessed peacefulness, but such as throw themselves fully into their Master's work.

In this crisis of our Church's mission, when

so many eyes are turned upon her, and so fruitful a field of labor lies open before her, both at home and abroad, may God give us a right estimate of our high vocation; and may He pour out upon us a larger spirit of earnestness, of self-denial, and of love to our Lord, and to the souls which He has redeemed!

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THE PASTORAL OFFICE.



CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE OFFICE.

OF the different figures used in Scripture to describe the ministerial office, perhaps the most beautiful is that in which it is compared to the peaceful but laborious calling of a *Shepherd*. We have doubtless oftentimes watched the process that goes on in some of the ordinary scenes of pastoral life—the singular helplessness of the sheep on the one hand, and the tender care of the shepherd on the other; how he leads them, as they need it, into fresh and fitting pastures, fostering the weak and diseased, treating with gentle tenderness the lambs and those that are with young; robbing nature even of her accustomed rest lest the flock should be imperilled through neglect; and, in fact, devoting all his time and powers to the welfare of his charge.

Now, it has pleased the Holy Spirit frequently to employ this figure when speaking of the Church of God. He describes men not merely as *sheep*, but as "sheep" that "*have gone astray*;" and the Son of God is spoken of as the Great "Shepherd of the sheep," "the Good Shepherd," "the Chief Shepherd," "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls," who counted not his life too dear a price to pay for the recovery of his flock.

The picture, however, yet needs something to make it complete. It represents the sheep of the flock and their condition; and Christ, their loving Shepherd, seeking them out and gathering them together, ordering every thing for their good, watching over them with untiring care, and ready to conduct them at last to that safe and happy fold above which He has purchased for them and prepared for their reception.

But this Almighty Shepherd is now in heaven, whilst his sheep are still upon earth; and though He could feed them from thence as easily as if He were still going in and out among them in person, yet He is pleased to employ men—poor, feeble, unworthy men—to act the Shepherd's part and take charge of His beloved flock. This, then, is the office of the

Christian Minister ; he is an *Under-Shepherd*, in subordination to Christ the *Chief Shepherd*. And happy is it for us in this country, and under our pastoral system, that each minister has his own appointed charge, each shepherd his own allotted portion of the flock to tend.

Keeping this scriptural illustration in view, the following remarks seem naturally to suggest themselves :

Each flock, and each sheep in the flock, is very precious in God's sight, and should therefore be so in ours. How abundantly has He provided for their present well-being and for their future happiness ! How wonderfully has He foreseen all their need, and how graciously has he supplied it ; so that each one may look up and say : "The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want !" And truly He has given the very strongest proof that He "careth for the sheep," by laying down His life for them.

Thus has our Lord shown how immeasurably dear to Him are the sheep of His pasture. And can we, His under-shepherds, dare to neglect those whom He has intrusted to our care ? Surely, if we do but estimate the value of their souls by the price at which they have been redeemed, we shall say that he can not be guilt-

less who, having taken upon himself such a charge as this, has lightly esteemed its awful importance — who, instead of “going before” his sheep and leading them by his own example and teaching, has been content to live like the world around him, and has either left his flock neglected and uncared for, or fed them with unwholesome food, and thus ruined, instead of nourishing their souls. “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people, Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them.” “My people hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray.”

And of all men he must be the most guilty, and, if he reflects at all, the most unhappy also, who, whilst he fills the most solemn of trusts, cares not to fulfill the duties connected with that trust. “He is obliged,” says Bishop Burnet, “to be often performing offices and pronouncing discourses in which, if he is not a good man, he not only has no pleasure, but must have a formed aversion to them. They must be the heaviest burden of his life. He must often feel secret challenges within; and though he as often silences these, yet such un-

welcome reflections are uncomfortable things. He is forced to manage himself with a perpetual constraint, and to observe a decorum in his deportment, lest he fall under a more public censure. . . . And if he perishes, he must fall into the lowest degree of misery, even to the portion of hypocrites; for his whole life has been a course of hypocrisy in the strictest sense of the word, which is the acting of a part and the counterfeiting another person. His sins have in them all possible aggravations. They are against knowledge, and against vows, and contrary to his character. And if he perishes, he does not perish alone, but carries a shoal down with him, either of those who have perished in ignorance through his neglect, or of those who have been hardened in their sins through his ill example.”

But a *second* thought connected with the pastoral work is, that it is the *Chief Shepherd only who can fit us for our post*. It is true we are called and appointed, and consecrated to our holy function by *man*; but the *Lord Himself* is the prime source of all our power, our authority, and our blessing; and to Him our account will at the Great Day have to be rendered. Though Church rulers may send us, without

Him we are not spiritually sent; without Him our strength is only weakness; without Him not one heart can be moved, not one sinner saved. It has been truly said: "Our commission is not of man; the ceremonial of the Church accredits, but the anointing of the Spirit designates."* It is the Great Shepherd Himself who employs us. He alone can effectually appoint us and send us on His glorious errand of mercy. We are but His messengers, His workmen, His mouthpiece. And as of old Satan spoke by the serpent, and thus seduced our First Parents, so God, speaking by his Son, or by us whom His Son delegates, leads back His wanderers to the fold of safety.

We have reason to be thankful, very thankful, for our Church calling — thankful for our holy orders — thankful for the privilege of ministering in a communion so pure and apostolic. But with all this, we shall yet be unsent, and our ministry unblest, unless Christ by His Spirit has called us to the work. And it would be well if we oftener bore in mind the qualification demanded by our Lord of His Apostle, "Lovest thou me?" as connected with that most blessed charge given to him: "Feed my

* Charge, by Archdeacon Law.

sheep." For, just in proportion as our hearts are filled with love to our Lord, shall we really care for the souls intrusted to our keeping.

How solemn, then, and how dignified is the office of an *Under-Shepherd*! We are employed by Christ Himself in the greatest of all works, the saving of souls. Oh! let us "magnify" our "office," not however by presuming upon the powers with which it invests us, and thus magnifying self; but by thankfully recognizing its holy and heavenly obligations, and by endeavoring with God's help to carry them out.

"The right consideration of this high calling, so far from fostering a vain-glorious spirit, has a direct tendency to deepen self-abasement and reverence! 'Woe is me,' said one of old, in contrasting this honor with his personal meanness, 'for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.'"*

Our pastoral duties belong to "the very foundations and roots of human life." By our ministry we are brought into contact with whatsoever is serious and important. To give honor to the Saviour of the world, and to bring to the arms of mercy the lost—this is the labor which

* Rev. C. Bridges on *The Christian Ministry*.

the Christian shepherd has put his hand to; and, if he is one of Christ's sending, nothing short of this will be his grand endeavor. Hence at our ordination we are thus addressed by the consecrating Bishop: "And now again we exhort you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye have in remembrance to how high a dignity, and how weighty an office and charge ye are called; that is to say, to be Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever."

What need then that the life of a Christian Pastor should be *peculiarly* sacred! What need has each minister to go daily to his Divine Master, and say: "Lord, I am thy servant; what wilt Thou have me to do? Teach me, guide me, fit me for my work." And what need have we also to be ever carrying our thoughts forward to that coming day, when the Lord shall say to each of us: "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?"

Thirdly, what view should we take of the *Wages* connected with our ministerial work?

Surely we should look for them *from Him alone whose servants we are*. The acquisition of a mere earthly recompense frequently, alas, forms but too prominent a place in the views both of those who are training for the sacred office, and of those who have entered upon their work. We often hear of "*prizes in the Church*." But surely there is something very unbecoming in any Christian minister so to lower his aim, as to be ever on the look out for an earthly reward. Should we not be looking far higher? Should we not be expectants of a more substantial crown? It has been said that "an earnest desire to gain souls to God is the only avarice permitted to a Pastor." And yet how is it with some of us? In the case of those who are preparing for the ministry, how often does the idea of obtaining a good Living float before the mind, acting as a most powerful, though most unworthy, stimulus! Then again, when the ministry is entered, and any change of cures is proposed, are we not too apt to inquire *how small an amount of labor* may be demanded of us, and *how large an amount of remuneration* we may expect? It may be said, this is only natural. True; but is it right? Were such the feelings of St. Paul, when a sea of trials lay before him, and he boldly plunged into

them, in the hope of saving souls? Was it in the expectation of worldly gain that he labored so abundantly? No, he counted all else but loss, that He might win Christ for himself, and win others to His service. We may well bear in mind too how, under the old dispensation, the ministers of God were shielded from the temptation of seeking an earthly reward—they had “no inheritance among their brethren; *the Lord*” was “*their inheritance.*” Happy for us, if we too can rest content with the blessedness of such a portion! True it is that “the laborer is worthy of his hire;” but it is surely most desirable that we should be ever on the watch against a mercenary and self-seeking spirit.

In connection with this subject, I can not forbear to quote the sentiments of a self-denying and devoted minister of our Church. “Where my present thoughts will lead me I know not; but I look around upon this lovely spot (his present parish) with all the indifference of a man who would with the greatest cheerfulness part with all, if a situation of greater usefulness, however laborious, should offer itself. Here I am, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” “Little less (says the writer of his memoir) than the spirit of a missionary was requisite to make him renounce the retirement, the sim-

plicity, and all the nameless delights and associations of that post for a place characterized by noise and dirt, and by the wretchedness and ignorance of a dense population." "I have looked again," he says, "over the barren hills, and smoke, and dirt, and feel that the consideration of fifteen thousand souls outweighs every thing. There are many who are reconciled to live here all their days in the pursuit of wealth; and shall not the honor of Christ and the love of souls engage *me* in the same self-denial? When a door is opened for the extension of His kingdom, shall a minister of Christ say, 'I will not enter it, because the country is dreary, and the place is full of filth and wretchedness?' God forbid! here I am; if it please God to fix me here, I shall be content to live and die among them. These things move me not: the only thing that moves me is the fear lest I should not bring a right spirit to the work."* Here was, indeed, a noble willingness to renounce all self-interest! Here was true devotedness to his Master's cause—a burning love for souls—a zeal for God's glory—a rising above the wages which this world has to offer.

* Quoted in the *Ministerial Character of Christ*, by the Bishop of Winchester.

Give us, Lord, something of this Christian heroism in the present day.

Instead then of perpetually inquiring into the value of benefices, and being importunate in our desire to be advanced—as if the measure of our gains were to be our chief aim in life—how much more noble and apostle-like to be resolved thankfully to accept the post which God has allotted to us, and labor there with our might, until He in His providence shall see fit to send us to another, and it may be to a more congenial, sphere of labor. One in such a state of mind will be happy, whatever be his station in the Church. And perhaps he will find the fruit of his contentment even in temporal blessings; for God often loves to take special care of those who are least anxious for their own worldly advancement. And further, we should bear in mind that a particular sphere may be suitable to us in the way of discipline, and as fitting us for another. We should learn, in short, to take a large view of God's dealings with us, and to realize the fact, that wherever we are, *that is our place* until He shall cause another to be vacated or created for us.

It is well to leave our case in God's hands, and to commit the disposal of it unreservedly to Him. We should be especially jealous too

over ourselves, lest we fall into the error of interpreting the leadings of providence according to our own preconceived wishes. For when considerations of self-interest mix themselves up with questions of duty, we are too ready to favor the one to the setting aside of the other. Surely then, to change our posts under the notion that we may be more useful elsewhere needs grave reflection, and much earnest prayer for guidance. Bengel, speaking on this point, says: "The less of his own that an instrument of God allows, and the more he leaves God to act Himself, the more pure and complete will his action be." There is indeed an unspeakable comfort in feeling that we are where God has placed us; and, on the other hand, there is something very awful in having pressed our own choice, when perhaps that choice may not have been in accordance with the will of God.

Oh! that we may be graciously kept from that cold, calculating, carnal spirit, that would feed the flock of God only for filthy lucre's sake! And oh! that we may be preserved from that woe which was pronounced against the shepherds of Israel, that did feed themselves instead of the flock: "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool; ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock." May the

love of Christ and of souls constrain us! And amidst all our trials, difficulties, and labors, may the eye of faith be ever looking to that reward which far exceeds any thing that earth can offer. It is reported of a celebrated divine, that he once uttered these memorable words: "I have passed through many places of honor and trust both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England for seventy years before; but were I assured that by my preaching I had converted but one soul unto God, I should herein take more comfort than in all the honors and offices that have been bestowed upon me."

But if it be our first and chief desire to serve Christ, He will be our Paymaster. Possibly He may not pay us just in the way that we may wish—He may even withhold from us what our carnal nature may desire—but still He will pay His faithful servants in gold that will never corrupt; with inward joy and peace here, and hereafter with a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Happy that Pastor whose one aim is to lead souls to Christ—who feels a longing desire to add some voices to swell the anthems of the blest—whilst he himself is cheered by the gracious approval of his heavenly Master! Truly the

life of the fervent-hearted, diligent, self-denying, hopeful minister of Christ is the happiest life in the world. Most glorious is his errand. It is one of the purest love and mercy. It is to rescue from destruction, and to call men into the path of life and peace. And while, one by one, his children pass before him to their endless rest, he looks for sure reünion, when they shall be his "joy and crown" forever.

CHAPTER II.

PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY.

A YOUNG man who is designed for the ministry is, under the present state of things, thrown much on his own resources. And the formation of his future ministerial character will in a large measure depend upon the line which he marks out for himself during the years of his college and seminary career. Those are precious years, which, if wasted, will cast before them a dull, heavy shade on his future path: but if turned to good account, they will tend not a little to form the foundation of his future happiness and usefulness.

I should be digressing from the plan of this book, if I entered into details here. Let me however say, that the embryo minister in his studies, his associates, and his pursuits, should never lose sight of what he is in after-years to become. He should feel even now that he is a minister *in prospect*; and his whole inner and

outer man should be moulding and preparing for his great and glorious calling.

I would venture to urge upon a young minister, *when first ordained*, the importance of choosing, if possible, a post in which he will be likely to have the countenance and advice of some earnest fellow-laborer. The writer having himself felt the great disadvantage of beginning his ministerial life, by taking charge of a large parish with scarcely any practical knowledge of the work allotted to him, would most strongly counsel any brother, during the period of his diaconate, to associate himself with some devoted clergyman; and, under his direction, to make himself thoroughly conversant with the practical parts of a minister's duty. Systematic theological reading will do much. The study of God's Word and prayer for guidance will do even more. But yet, if we have never knelt by a sick-bed; if we have never taken a class in a Sunday-school; if we have never come into actual contact with the wants, and habits, and ways of the poor, how can we be fitted for so great a work as the spiritual management of a parish? As well might we expect that books on medical science, or clinical lectures on surgery, would suffice to render a man an expert *Practitioner*; or that a man can become a thor-

ough proficient in *Navigation* who has never been at sea, though he may have learnt the theory of it at home.

Hence, I think there can be but little doubt that the first year, at least, of a young clergyman's life should be passed with some elder brother in the ministry, whose wise counsel, zealous example, and brotherly kindness, would afford no small benefit and comfort to one desiring to labor as "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

If the Reader of this book is a candidate for the Pastoral Office, I would say to him: Before all, look closely into your *motives*; and if you believe them to be pure—if you are entering the ministry in a serious, thoughtful spirit—if the love of souls, and an earnest desire to save them, impels you—if you feel that the work is one in which your own soul will find delight, and that you are heartily willing to labor in the service of your Heavenly Master—then I hesitate not to say, that you have chosen for yourself the noblest and most delightful of all professions. It is, indeed, a post of the highest honor—one in which you may look for a rich blessing from above, which will open to you a path of much peace and usefulness, and in

which it will be your privilege to hold the nearest communion with Him with whom you hope to spend eternity.

That man will be the most likely to become a useful and valuable minister who has realized in his own experience the misery and hateful-ness of indwelling sin, and the pardoning love of Christ. Dr. Guthrie relates an anecdote of a traveller, who, on his return to his native land, paid a visit one day to a collection of foreign birds. He saw them ruffling their gorgeous plumage against the wires that confined them, and struggling to be free. "He looked wistfully and sadly on these captives, till tears started in his eye. Turning round on their owner, he asked the price of one, paid it in strange gold, and, opening the cage, set the prisoner free. Thus and thus he did with captive after captive, till every bird had flown away, soaring to the skies, singing on the wings of liberty. The crowd stared and stood amazed: they thought him mad, till, to the question of their curiosity, he replied: 'I was once a captive: I know the sweets of liberty.' And so they who have experience of guilt, who have felt the serpent's bite, the burning poison in their veins, who, on the one hand, have felt the sting of conscience, and on the other, the peace

of faith, the joys of hope, the love, the light, the liberty, the life, that are found in Jesus—they, not excepting heaven's highest angels, are the fittest to preach a Saviour, to plead with man for God, or with God for man."

But if, on the other hand, you are undertaking the office on any lower grounds than those which I have spoken of, and if your own heart is not the subject of Divine grace, then there can be no joy or comfort for you in your sacred work. A minister's position, when his ministry is not *his life*, can not be a happy one. There is something unspeakably awful in taking it up as a mere worldly profession, just as you would any other—"going into the Church," as it is called, merely because you have no particular bias toward any other profession; or because there is something quiet, respectable, and gentlemanlike in the calling of a Clergyman; or in conformity with the mere wishes of others. "What man on earth," says Mr. Cecil, "is so pernicious a drone as an idle Clergyman—a man engaged in the most serious profession in the world, who rises to eat, and drink; and lounge, and trifle; and goes to bed, and then rises again to do the same?" Thank God, we believe there are very few such to be found in this our day. But there are some, we fear, who

are still entering the ministry at least from defective if not from unworthy motives.

The man, for instance, who has chosen the sacred office merely as promising him a harmless, peaceful, and easy life, or affording him greater facilities for following the pursuits of science and literature, has mistaken his errand, and is scarcely less guilty than he who says: "Put me, I pray thee, into one of the Priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."

Scott, the Commentator, speaks thus of his feelings upon entering the Ministry: "My views, as far as I can ascertain them, were these three: a desire of a less laborious and more comfortable way of procuring a livelihood than otherwise I had the prospect of; the expectation of more leisure to employ in reading, of which I was inordinately fond; and a proud conceit of my abilities, with a vain-glorious imagination that I should some time distinguish and advance myself in the literary world. These were my ruling motives in taking this bold step—motives as opposite to those which should influence men to enter this sacred office as pride is opposite to humility, ambition to contentment in a low estate, and a willingness to be the least of all, and the servant of all; as opposite as the love of self, of the world, of

filthy lucre, and slothful ease, is to the love of God, of souls, and of the laborious work of the ministry. To me, therefore, be the shame of this hateful sin, and to God be all the glory for overruling it for good!"

To those who allow similar motives to influence them in their choice of this sacred profession, I would say: Think not, that so long as this is the case you can be happy in your calling. Your work will prove a burden to you; and the very nearness of your connection with holy things will tend only the more to deaden your own soul, and to increase tenfold your condemnation. Truly has it been said, that "the Christian ministry is the worst of all *trades*, but the best of all *professions*."

I entreat you, then, to pause before you take a step from which there is no receding. Make sure of your ground. Be fully persuaded in your own mind before you pledge yourself to an undertaking so fraught either with blessings or with sorrows. You are now like a Sailor, standing at the water's edge, and surveying that vast ocean, on which your lot is soon to be cast, and on the wide waves of which your future life is to be spent. You will do well to think of the great work to be accomplished, of the billows that will rise around you, and of the

pains and toils to be endured. Now, therefore, count well the cost. Hesitate ere you launch irrevocably on the eventful voyage. Ask yourself, as in the sight of God, whether your mind is made up—quite made up—to endure hardship, and to offer yourself as one unreservedly devoted to his Master's service. Remember, that if you once take the rudder in hand, you must not leave it. Once set apart for the work of the ministry, there is no receding from it; yea, "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"!

If, from what has been said, any one about to take upon himself holy orders should, upon looking at his leading motives, feel serious misgivings as to his fitness for the ministry, well is it that so painful a conviction has forced itself upon him before it is too late. Far better will it be for him to retrace his steps, or, at any rate, to pause awhile, than heedlessly to undertake a charge, and that for life, of such solemn responsibility.

Let me not, however, be misunderstood: I would not intentionally discourage any who have, *in the main*, right feelings concerning the ministry. I would not say a word to alarm the weak and timid, yet real, servant of Christ. His heart may tell him that all is not yet with

him as he would have it to be. His motives may be mixed, and even defective, according to his own estimate; but still there may be in him "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." This, perhaps, is the tremulous language of his heart: "I wish to do good, I desire to glorify my Lord, and to be the instrument in His hands of saving souls. But I fear lest worldly considerations also—such, for instance, as emolument, the gentlemanly nature of the profession, etc.—are, in *some* measure, weighing with me."

Now, would I at once check such an one from entering upon the ministerial office? No; I would rather say: Consult some one in whom you can confide; lay open your case to him. Above all, examine yourself closely; entreat God to implant in you purer and more single motives; and rest not till a *prevailing* desire to give yourself heart and soul to the work predominates over every other feeling.

Happy indeed is that man whose conscience tells him that he is sincere as to the great end he has in view, whose mind is clearly fixed on the work he has taken in hand, and who looks forward with joy to the glorious prospect of ministering before the Lord! I would speak a few further words of affectionate counsel to such an

one on the manner of turning to the best advantage the time of preparation yet allotted to him.

He should spend it for the most part in *distinctively ministerial study*. For, to teach others, he needs to be well furnished himself; and to teach others as a minister of Christ involves the most solemn responsibility. And surely something more is needed than that bare amount of knowledge which has enabled him to pass muster before his examiners, and will satisfy the ordinary requirements of the Bishop. He who is to be an instructor of others should assuredly have his own mind thoroughly imbued with those Gospel truths which he is commissioned to expound. He has need to be a man of store like Ezra, "a ready scribe in the law of God."

General knowledge, too, will be useful, very useful, if consecrated to the service of the sanctuary; and, indeed, there is not a single department of science or a branch of study that *may* not be made subservient to this great end. It has been well observed that the same law holds good with the mind as with the earth; fruitfulness is produced by a variety and alternation of culture.

But still, as Herbert says: "The chief and

top of our knowledge must exist in the Book of books, the storehouse and magazine of life and comfort, the *Holy Scriptures*." A thorough acquaintance with them is needed, and that not merely intellectual and theoretical; it must be such a practical and experimental knowledge as will influence and indoctrinate the heart. "In the hidden book of Scripture," writes Witsius, "and nowhere else, are opened the secrets of the more sacred wisdom. Whatever is not drawn from them — whatever is not built upon them—whatever does not most exactly accord with them—however it may recommend itself by the appearance of the most sublime wisdom, or rest upon ancient tradition, consent of learned men, or the weight of plausible argument, is vain, futile, and, in short, a very lie. Let the theologian delight in these sacred oracles; let him exercise himself in them; let him live in them; let him draw all his wisdom from them; let him embrace nothing in religion which he does not find there. The attentive study of the Scriptures has a sort of constraining power. It fills the mind with the most splendid form of heavenly truth, which it teaches with purity, solidity, certainty, and without the least mixture of error. We ought to draw our views of

Divine truth immediately from the Scriptures themselves.”*

Another work of preparation which I have spoken of is equally if not more important—namely, *Prayer*. It was one of Luther’s golden sayings: “Bene orasse est bene studuisse.” Quesnel, in his commentary on St. Luke 3:2, writes: “How great is the difference between a preacher formed gradually by the hand of God in retirement, fasting, and prayer, and those ordained in haste, who have no other school but the world, no other masters besides themselves, and no other preparation than human studies, interrupted by worldly conversations, diversions, good cheer, and the like.” And again he writes: “It is necessary that a preacher should have laid in a large stock of knowledge by the study of the Scriptures. He must likewise learn their spiritual meaning otherwise than by study. The unction of the Spirit is a great master in this science, and it is by prayer that we become His scholars.” “He that is a disciple of Scripture,” says Witsius, “should also be a disciple of the Spirit.”

The most varied knowledge, and even a large acquaintance with God’s Word, will not of themselves be enough. “The greatest and hardest

Witsius, quoted by the Rev. C. Bridges.

preparation is *within*." The heart must be tuned for the solemn work; and to effect this, much prayer and communion with God are needed.

"An entrance upon the great work of the ministry without prayer," observes Bridges, "would be to go a most fearful 'warfare at our own charges.' The kingdom of heaven would have little to apprehend from an attack of literature, or from any systematic mechanism of external form. The prey will never be 'taken from the mighty, nor the lawful captive delivered,' by any other power than the ministry of the Gospel clothed with Almighty energy. The Christian ministry is a work of faith; and that it may be a work of faith, it must be a work of prayer. We may therefore safely conclude with Bernard: 'Utilis lectio, utilis eruditio; sed magis necessaria *unctio*, quippe quæ docet de omnibus.'"

There are many points of importance to which the candidate for holy orders has need to turn his attention. But I have contented myself with dwelling especially on these two, *Study* and *Prayer*, as being the more essential.

The following advice to a friend preparing for the ministry is from the pen of one who has been lately taken up to join the ministry of

angels: "It is a matter of sincere rejoicing to me that the good hand of our God seems to be making your way plain into the ministry; because I trust the evident bias of your mind for some time past has been something more than the mere force of natural inclination. Rather I would believe that our great Master has been secretly preparing you by His Spirit for so solemn an office. It seems to me more and more solemn every day. Now that I am enabled to examine myself with more leisure than formerly amid the busy stir of parish engagements, I confess that I am filled with shame at the review of my conduct—so many mixed motives! such bustling idleness! such shallow spirituality! Let me urge you, my dear friend, *to be much, very much, in prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit*, that your thoughts may be purified and elevated to a supreme love to Christ and souls."*

**Memoir of the Rev. H. Forsyth.*

CHAPTER III.

ORDINATION.

WHAT period of a clergyman's life can be more unspeakably solemn than the period of his ordination? It is, as it were, the time of his ministerial baptism—when he takes upon himself the most holy vows, is admitted into a new and sacred order, and is sent forth on his high errand by those who have authority to commission him. Holy hands are now laid upon him, and a holy office intrusted to him—the very holiest that a mortal man can be charged with.

How searching the question proposed to him ere he can be set apart for the ministry: “DO YOU TRUST THAT YOU ARE INWARDLY MOVED BY THE HOLY GHOST TO TAKE UPON YOU THIS OFFICE AND MINISTRATION, TO SERVE GOD FOR THE PROMOTING OF HIS GLORY AND THE EDIFYING OF HIS PEOPLE?” This is truly a most close and vital question. And the high import of it must not be frittered

away and diluted to suit the lower feelings of one who is only half in earnest. No, it is a very awful question, asked at a very awful moment. The meaning of it I take to be no less than this: Have you good reason to believe that the Holy Spirit Himself is preparing you for this office, and has planted within you a desire to minister before God, to preach His saving Word, and to watch over His people? Is this the one chief motive which sways you in your choice?

When this vocation is wanting—that is to say, when a man has not been inwardly called of God—he can not, without unhappiness, and what is more without actual sin, put his hand to the work before him. We would remind him of the strong and awful declaration uttered against those who assumed the prophet's office under similar circumstances: "The prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak . . . that prophet shall die." "Say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord, Thus saith the Lord God, Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing." "I am against the prophets that steal my words."

It is very possible for a man, without such a vocation, to conduct himself with outward decency as a minister of Christ. He may be desirous of avoiding all that will cause offense, or that will profane his office. He may pass through the world irreproachably; nay, he may by his inoffensiveness win the esteem of many. But can he expect a blessing from above, and hope to be really useful?

Again, we have known men who have entered upon the ministry with defective views of their solemn undertaking, but who have afterward been led to feel its unspeakable importance, and have since wholly consecrated themselves to the work. God has accepted them, and blessed their labors. But what does this prove? Not that such persons were justified in having assumed the holy office with such low views of its solemn import; but that God's tender mercy and forbearance has abounded marvellously toward them, and that He has in His undeserved goodness received them, and employed them as laborers in His service. Surely, however, we must regard these as exceptional cases. And while we can but thank a gracious God for such special exercise of His grace, we would caution those who are about to be ordained not to presume upon

God's forbearance, but rather to ask themselves again and again whether they are indeed *moved by the Holy Ghost*.

But what constitutes a "call" to the ministry? This it is very difficult in some cases to define. In desiring holy orders, there may be many external circumstances which we are justified in regarding as *providential leadings*. But these, if they stand alone, are not sufficient to constitute a "call." It must be something altogether apart from worldly considerations and prospects, the bias of parents, inaptitude for any secular profession, or a mere liking for the outward routine of ministerial labor. It must be the inward testimony of the heart bearing witness to our conscience that we love the Saviour, and desire to win souls to Him; and further, a conviction that we do willingly, heartily, and hopefully engage in the work with a single eye to God's glory. These are essential, in addition of course to the outward call of the Church.

"Certainly," says Bishop Burnet, "the answer that is made (by the candidate for holy orders) ought to be well considered; for if any says, 'I trust so,' that yet knows nothing of any such motive, and can give no account of it,

he lies to the Holy Ghost, and makes his first approach to the altar with a lie in his mouth, and that not to men, but to God. And how can one expect to be received by God, or to be sent and sealed by Him, that dares do a thing of so crying a nature as to pretend that he trusts he has this motive, who knows that he hath it not?" And on the other hand, speaking of one who is thus moved and qualified by the working of Divine grace, he adds: "This man, and only this man, can in truth and with a good conscience answer that *he trusts he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*. And every one who ventures on the saying without this is a sacrilegious profaner of God and of His Holy Spirit. He breaks in upon His Church; not to feed it, but to rob it. And it is certain he can not be thought to enter in by the door, who prevaricates in the first word that he says in order to his admittance."

Happy then is he who can give an unhesitating answer to this tremendous question! Happy he who, having first unreservedly surrendered his heart to Christ, now desires to give his time, his strength, his life, yea all that he has, to the great work of saving souls! Happy he, whose conscience tells him that the glory of God, and the love of souls, is nearest to his own

heart—who has again and again, upon his knees, sought Divine guidance and direction, and who now feels all his inclinations turned toward this holy calling. He, and he only, can safely respond to the searching question which is put to him by God's authorized servant; and he may look upon the sacred rite of Ordination as conveying a large blessing to him, and consecrating him for a glorious employment.

Yes, God will impart strength, and grace, and every needful gift, if He is sought with earnestness and sincerity. "Where the call is manifest, the promise is assured, 'Certainly I will be *with thee.*' But if we run unsent, our labors must prove unblest. Many, we fear, have never exercised their minds upon this inquiry. But do we not see a blight resting upon their unproductive ministrations? 'I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.' Under the old dispensation it was marked as a most dangerous presumption to touch the ark of God without a Divine warrant. Nor is it a less direct act of usurpation to take authority in the Church of Christ without a commission from her Divine Head. There is nothing in which a king would willingly be more absolute than in the choice of his ministers; and shall we dare

to contest and take away the right from the King of kings?"*

One can hardly imagine a young candidate for the ministry looking upon his Ordination in any other than a most solemn light. In speaking of it to others, any thing bordering on lightness should be guarded against. Whatever *they* may think of it, it should be to *him* a subject of most solemn import. As the holy season approaches, he should prepare for it by holding very close communion with God. He will probably meet at his examination a number of young men just of that age when life and health and spirits are in their full vigor. Many of the lower feelings which are common to an ordinary examination will be apt to possess his mind. Let him be watchful, lest Satan should get an advantage of him. Let him pray that he may be kept in a sober, chastened frame of mind, and may resist every approach to levity, as a thing totally out of season. Each one should feel too that he may, by his bearing at this critical time, give a tone to others, which may be productive of much present and future blessing. It will be well for him, if his Ordination shall be so entered upon, that he may be able hereafter to look back upon it as a time of such

* *Bridges on the Ministry.*

personal profit, and a season of such "refreshing from the presence of the Lord," as to shed a happy influence on his future course.

When the eventful Day arrives, he should consecrate it by prayer. He should give himself, as it were, afresh to the Lord, to be His forever. He should approach the ordinance with trembling, and yet with a full assurance that he is about to receive both his Lord's commission and his Lord's blessing. And when invested with his sacred order, instead of allowing any thing like a feeling of pride or self-importance to creep in, he should stand amazed at the contrast between his own unworthiness and the greatness of his charge—ready to exclaim with the Apostle: "Unto me, *who am less than the least of all saints*, is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ!"

Many have found it desirable in after years to commemorate their Ordination Day, by bringing under review the leading circumstances of their past ministerial history, whether humbling or elevating, sorrowful or joyous; and also by much prayer, and a fresh dedication of themselves to the Lord's service. On such occasions the Ordinal might be read

with profit, and the two great inspired episcopal Charges contained in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

The young minister, being ordained, henceforth belongs in a peculiar manner to Christ and to His Church. He must never forget, that, from the moment he receives his ministerial commission, he ceases to be a private man. From this time forth he is set apart from worldly employments, and has to concern himself mainly about unseen and eternal things. His great mission is to keep before men's minds, which are always in danger of being absorbed in the things of earth, a faith in things unseen—to be, in short, among men, “the man of the soul, and of eternity.” St. Paul speaks of himself as one “*separated* unto the gospel of God ;” and when Barnabas was chosen for his work, the words of the Holy Ghost were: “*Separate* me Barnabas and Saul.” “A minister,” says Cecil, “is a Levite. Other men are not Levites ; their affairs are about the little transactions of this world. But a minister is called and set apart, for a high and sublime business. His transactions are to be between the living and the dead, between heaven and earth ; and he must stand as with wings on his shoulders ; he must be as an eagle turning toward heaven on strong pinions.”

The heavenly mission of the Christian minister is beautifully pictured by the author of *The Christian Year* :

“Ye who your Lord’s commission bear,
 His way of mercy to prepare :
 Angels he calls you : be your strife
 To lead on earth an Angel’s life.
 Think not of rest : though dreams be sweet,
 Start up, and ply your heavenward feet.
 Is not God’s oath upon your head,
 Ne’er to sink back on slothful bed ?
 Never again your loins untie,
 Nor let your torches waste and die,
 Till, when the shadows thickest fall,
 Ye hear your Master’s midnight call.”

As *private* Christians, the Lord hath “called us unto holiness :” what, then, I ask, must be the calling of the Christian *minister* ? He is not merely to go unblamably through a certain routine of duties. He is to be a living pattern to those committed to his care. He is to be ever about his Master’s business. He is, in short, by virtue of his very office, a man of a consecrated character, and should be not merely a *teacher* of holiness, but also a *lover* of holiness, and an *example* of holiness. His light should shine especially bright before all.

Such being the high requirements and responsibilities of the ministerial calling, what need is there that Christ's people who know the efficacy of prayer should plead earnestly, both for those who are entering, and those who have entered, the sacred inclosure. Our Lord, in His day, urged His followers to pray that faithful laborers might be sent into His harvest. And such should be the prayer of the Christian Church now—that the Lord would guide the minds of our bishops, “faithfully and wisely to make choice of *fit* persons to serve in the sacred ministry of His Church,” and that He would give His grace to those who are ordained, “that both by their life and doctrine they may set forth His glory, and set forward the salvation of all men.”

“We are fallen upon days,” says Bishop Sumner,* “when it behoves the Church to intrust her cause to none but those who profess themselves willing to take up the divine panoply, and buckle on the whole armor of God. The Church can not now engage in her service the blind, and the halt, and the lame. Her servants must be unblemished—‘able ministers of the New Testament,’ ready to give an answer to every man that asketh them

**The Ministerial Character of Christ.*

a reason of the hope that is in them—'apt to teach,' content to take patiently the spoiling of their goods for the truth's sake. This is no time for folding the hands in slumber, or for acquiescing in any low and cold standard of decent inoffensiveness." "Our great want at the present time," says one of our leading secular journalists, "is that which only God Himself can effectually supply — namely, an increased number of really devoted men in the ministry — men who can say with the Apostle: 'I seek not yours, but *you*.'"

CHAPTER IV.

THE MINISTERIAL CHARACTER.

ORDINATION admits us to our privilege as Christ's Ambassadors—as the Under-shepherds of His Flock. It sets the seal of the Church's sanction to our work. But with it there must be a correspondence of *Character* on our part, or all will be a miserable failure. Apostolic orders will avail us little, without apostolic holiness of character.

1. A Minister, to be successful, must be one who has *a love for souls*. Our work is with souls—immortal souls—souls born for endless weal or wo. And these souls are committed to our care. Oh! how unspeakably important a trust! How immeasurably great a charge! The main object we should have in view may be gathered from the Apostle's solemn language: "They watch for your souls, as they that must give an account." That which should be uppermost in the mind of every

true Pastor, is a love for souls. It was so in that of the devoted Brainerd. "I longed," said he, "to be as a flame of fire, continually glowing in the Divine service, preaching, and building up Christ's kingdom to my latest, my dying hour." "Oh! labor, labor to win souls to Christ," was the advice of one to his brethren in the ministry: "I will say this for your encouragement—when the Lord led me out to be most earnest in this way, He poured in most comfort into my own heart, so that He gave me my reward in my bosom."

Who can measure the value of each individual soul committed to our care? Until we get a sense of this strongly fixed in our minds, we can not be earnest or useful Ministers. We must look at our people in the light of eternity, remembering that the means of their salvation are in a measure in our hands. It is not their praise or their good-will or their favor that should be our prominent aim; it is *the salvation of their souls*—this is the one central object toward which our thoughts and energies should turn.

For let us remember this—that if we have *any inferior end* before us to that of winning souls, the great object of our ministry is unfulfilled. Any thing, however harmless and even

desirable in itself, which draws us away from this grand aim, must be considered as a deviation from the ministerial path. "O my brethren!" says Dr. Doddridge, in his sermon on the evil and danger of neglecting souls, "let us consider how fast we are posting through this dying life, in which we are to manage concerns of infinite moment—how fast we are passing on to the immediate presence of our Lord, to give up our account to Him! I would not for ten thousand worlds be that man who, when God shall ask him at last how he has employed his time whilst he continued a minister of His Church, and had the care of souls, shall be obliged to reply: 'I have restored many corrupt passages in the classics, and illustrated many which were before obscure. I have cleared up many intricacies in chronology or geography. I have solved many perplexed cases of algebra. I have refined on astronomical calculations, and left behind me many sheets on these curious and difficult subjects. And these are the employments in which my life has been worn out, while preparation for the pulpit, and ministrations in it, did not demand my more immediate attendance.' O Sirs! as for the waters that are drawn from these springs, how sweet soever they may taste

to a curious mind that thirsts after them, or an ambitious mind that thirsts for the applause they sometimes procure, I fear there is too often reason to pour them out before the Lord with rivers of penitential tears, as the blood of souls which have been forgotten, whilst these trifles have been remembered and pursued.”

Again, there are many things, especially in a large parish, connected indeed with the ordinary routine of ministerial duty, which may too much attract the mind of the young minister from the grand object before him. The almost wholesale way in which he sometimes has to deal with baptisms, marriages, burials, etc.; the time required to attend to the bodily wants of his parishioners; the impossibility of becoming acquainted with each individual member of his overgrown flock; the habit which, if not watched against, is soon acquired, of not realizing their individuality—all this has a tendency to deaden the lively concern even of those who entered the ministry from the purest motives. It is surely then most needful to be ever placing before the mind the grand and noble object we should have supremely in view.

“Let it be written in letters of light, that *the conversion of the soul of apostate man to God*

is the ultimate design of the ministry. A preacher of the Gospel is not merely the teacher of a sacred science, not merely the leader of religious worship, not merely the administrator of religious ordinances, not merely the ruler of a Christian Church. He is all this, it is true; but he is more—he is instrumentally the converter of men's souls to God. To leave off with the lesser ends is just as if we should be satisfied with regulating the conversation and promoting the order of a company of condemned criminals in a prison, without attempting to induce them to use the prescribed means of saving their lives." *

2. *Personal Holiness* should form a prominent ingredient in the character of the Christian Pastor. He must be preëminently a holy man. Alas! it is not a necessary consequence that because a man is a Minister, *therefore* he is a holy person. Ordination does not necessarily confer holiness, although it assumes the existence of it. It provides us with our credentials as Christ's Ambassadors; but it does not convey into our souls those inward gifts and graces which can alone fit us for a right discharge of our great embassy. We need to have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our

* James's *Earnest Ministry*.

hearts, to fit us for the service of our heavenly King. "What!" says one whose words I have already quoted, "does it follow, because the holiest vows are upon us, that therefore the Spirit of Holiness must dwell within us? because we teach, that therefore we must ourselves be taught? because we have access to the tree of knowledge, that therefore we partake of the tree of life? because we uplift the cross, that we sit beneath its shade? because we invite to Christ, that therefore we are His? Alas! our acquaintance with Satan's wiles, the deceivableness of iniquity, and the treachery of the heart, warn us that position and profession neither implant grace nor secure consistency." "With the early preachers of the Gospel, Christ was the pulse of each thought; holiness their atmosphere; God their home; His glory their object; His love their motive; the world a repudiated thing behind their backs."*

Most important is the inward state of our own souls. Let the heart be right with God, and it will give tone to the Home, the Parish, and the Pulpit. Most truly has it been said, that if we would quicken souls, our own souls must be alive; if we would soften hearts, our

* Archdeacon Law.

own hearts must melt ; if we would make men real, we must be real ourselves.

In fact, it must never be forgotten that the first duty of a Minister is with his own soul. "Take heed," says St. Paul, "unto *thyself*, and to the doctrine." What Daguet says of a Bishop may equally be said of every Clergyman : "He must begin the discharge of his duties by attending to his own soul : he should, before all things, be concerned for his own salvation. Before he extends his charity to his neighbor, he must be replenished with holiness from God. Before he is touched with the misery of others, he must be sensible of his own ills and maladies. Before he exhorts others to yield obedience to the Divine law, he must set the pattern of obedience himself. The first duty of a Bishop (and so also of a Minister) is to be a saint."

Now, in one sense, the life of a Clergyman is more favorable to religious growth than any other ; for who so concerned with holy things as himself ? The very duties of his office require him to be often on his knees, and often thinking and speaking about heaven. But the atmosphere of religion which he ordinarily breathes may in a manner prove to be his greatest danger. His necessary familiarity

with holy things may, if he be not watchful, tend to deaden the vividness of their reality. Just as it is when we are in the midst of some beautiful scenery, the guide who points out to us the different objects of interest loses oftentimes his taste for the beauties he has again and again described. And whilst he is pointing them out to us, he himself loathes the sight of the path so often trodden, and of the lofty mountains and lovely valleys so repeatedly visited. If he would really relish the scenery, he must be often exploring it afresh by himself, and discovering new points for his own admiration. The circumstance of religion being a Minister's profession and employment, exposes his own personal religion to danger. He must *officially* go through certain religious acts. He must, at all events, wear the *appearance* of religion. He must utter its language, and display its feelings.

Does it not, then, under such circumstances, require double watchfulness to maintain the true spirit of godliness? "I have prayed, (says one who well knew his own spiritual danger;) I have talked; I have preached; but now I should perish after all, if I did not feed on the bread which I have broken to others." What an astounding thought, that probably there

may be many ministers who have directed others to heaven, and yet they themselves have never entered it! They have been like way-posts, pointing out the road to thousands of travellers, without ever moving along it themselves. "Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you." "O Sirs!" said Baxter, "how many have preached Christ, and perished for want of a saving interest in Him!"

How very necessary then to study God's Word each day for the nourishment and growth of one's own soul in grace and holiness! How very necessary to see that our own lamp is fed with oil, that it may give out a bright and holy light! Well is it for us, if, in reference to our dealings with theological truth, we can echo the feelings of the saintly Melancthon: "*Ego mihi conscius sum, nunquam aliam ob causam tractavisse theologiam, nisi ut meipsum emendarem.*" The following lines are the expression of the same pious, loving heart, which, in the midst of wearying labors and controversial turmoil, could breathe forth this peaceful prayer:

“Fac ut possim demonstrare
Quam sit dulce te amare,
Tecum pati, tecum flere,
Tecum semper congaudere.”

3. *Gravity* should be another essential feature in the ministerial character. St. Paul says, “Let the deacons be *grave*”—not sour and melancholy, but grave—not uncheerful, but serious and sober-minded. The every-day life of a Minister is, from the nature of the case, especially solemn, since he has to do with whatever is most serious and important in life.

There should then be a sobriety and solidity about his character, which may at once bespeak his sacred calling. He is the Lord’s Servant, an Ambassador from the Court of Heaven, a Messenger on the most sacred errand. It is of little use our speaking and preaching seriously, if our manner and our life are trifling. The world looks at us out of the Church, to know what we mean when in it.

It is especially needful to bear this in mind in society. If a Minister loses the deportment becoming his office, those whom he is with may take advantage of his unwatchfulness, and for the time lose sight of his holy calling. Our manner, however, should be natural—that

which flows from a constant sense of our position and duties. It should be far removed too from that self-importance which will only disgust men ; and also from that affected silence and reserve which will repel, rather than attract, those with whom we mix.

The natural manner of some, we know, is decidedly cheerful and elastic. And surely to those who are endued by nature with such a temper there is cause for thankfulness. But then they have, perhaps, on this score peculiar need of watchfulness. While the Christian Minister should ever be cheerful, still he should acquire a certain control over his spirits. The world can only judge of us by the outward man ; and is not harm often done by apparent levity, while in fact the soul may be deeply penetrated with the reality of eternal things ?

The beautiful and graphic description drawn by the author of *Pilgrim's Progress* will be familiar to every reader, and suggest its appropriate lesson. "Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hung up against the wall. And this was the fashion of it: it had eyes lifted up to heaven ; the best of books in its hand ; the law of truth was written upon its lips ; the world was behind its

back ; it stood as if it pleaded with men ; and a crown of gold did hang over its head."

4. *A sanguine and hopeful temperament* is also a valuable qualification for ministerial usefulness ; and this we should endeavor to cultivate. The lot of the first preachers of the Gospel was difficult and laborious ; and shall we expect one of uncheckered ease ? Shall we look upon toils and discouragements as a strange thing, and not rather expect some measure of trial even in our happiest service ? Whoever lays himself out for the good of souls must not hope to effect much without encountering difficulties ; he will often have to make way against the stream ; his plans will sometimes be frustrated by the apathy of one, and the hostility of another. His heart will also be saddened by the after career of one who once gave fair promise of better things. And, worse than all, he will often have to contend against the secret misgivings of his own faithless spirit. But the Christian Minister must cheerfully bear up even in the midst of such discouragements. He must not let hope die within him ; for to raise fallen human nature from its low state, to bring back the wanderer, to save the lost, to warn, re-

prove, rebuke, exhort, needs the faith and perseverance of one who would labor on even when a calculating and over-prudent spirit would despair.

To take a desponding view of our labors is almost fatal to our usefulness—to go into the pulpit for instance, with a feeling that we shall be unable to command the attention of our hearers—to enter the cottages of our people with a suspicion on our minds that our visits are not acceptable—to speak as though we were speaking to unwilling ears—this is a feeling that must be at once checked, or it will ruin our influence.

This is especially the case with regard to *preaching*. A great secret in interesting our audience is to preach as one who is really interested in what he has to tell them, and who feels, too, that he has something to tell them worth their hearing. The moment a Clergyman gets to think that his people do not care to hear him, either his confidence begins to flag, and his usefulness to be paralyzed; or he becomes grievously indifferent to the results of his ministry. Watch against this feeling. Pray against it. And if you will only throw yourself into your subject, and try to realize the truths you set before

your congregation, you will be sure to win their attention, and, by God's blessing, their hearts also. Beware of despondency, and never allow yourself to sink under its pressure. "This," said Mr. Scott, "is a temptation to which you are peculiarly exposed, and peculiarly accessible; yet if it once get fast hold of your mind, it will have a very unfavorable effect on the aggregate of your usefulness in future life. Even at Ravenstone, I remember complaining, in a New Year's sermon, that for a whole twelvemonth I had seen no fruit of my preaching; yet it appeared, within the course of the next twelvemonth, that not less than ten or twelve had been brought to consider their ways during that discouraging year; besides others, I trust, that I did not know of." "Facts like these," observes Bishop Sumner, in quoting the above passage, "are loud in teaching the useful lesson, that a very discouraging course, properly sustained, may eventually prove useful beyond all expectation."

If a man allows himself to look upon the dark side of things—if a frigid, calculating prudence is his only guide—he will, humanly speaking, effect but little. He may acquire a name for discretion—he may keep clear of

many difficulties, by which his more zealous brother may be beset—but no great harvest will he gather in, no mighty exploits will he achieve, no spiritual triumphs will reward his labors.

Then, whatever your natural temperament be, seek for a warm heart, an ardent desire to save souls, and an unwavering faith, or you will never accomplish great things. Think little of your own poor self; but think much of that Almighty One who employs you as an instrument for gathering in His lost sheep.

5. *Wisdom*, too, is essential for an “able Minister.” He must be a “wise master-builder.” It has been said, that God has small need of our wisdom, but that He has still less need of our ignorance.

We have to deal with human nature in all its types, with minds of every mould, with intelligence of every grade, from the lowest to the highest, with corruption and self-deceit in every form. We have need to see far into men’s hearts, and to understand and be able to meet their wants. “Many intricate and perplexed cases will come before us; it will be disgraceful to us not to be prepared for such. Our patients will put many questions

to us : it will be disgraceful to us not to be prepared to answer them. We are like merchants engaged in extensive concerns ; a little ready money in the pocket will not answer the demands that will be made upon us. Some of us think it will ; but they are grossly deceived. There must be a well-furnished account at the banker's."* We must be "wise as serpents." St. Paul was not a worse preacher, because he was a man of learning. Though he was "rude in speech, yet not in knowledge." We must be prepared to meet the want of *all* our hearers, both educated and uneducated. There is at this time a certain state of mind, thirsting for information, which is now spreading through all classes : we must meet it, and give it a right impulse. We must bring all knowledge to bear upon the one great object we have in view. We must make every little stream to pour in its contribution. Men will expect much from us ; let us not disappoint them. They will look to us as the appointed drawers of water at the well-spring of life : let us be ready to supply them. Let us not send them empty away, saying : "I have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep."

How difficult to lead and guide aright a

* Cecil.

whole flock, composed of the most diverse elements! Gregory Nazianzen says: "The art of all arts, the science of all sciences, appears to me to be the art and science of directing men, the most varied of beings, and the most changeable. . . . Some have need to be nourished with milk—the most simple and elementary lessons; but others require that wisdom which is spoken among them that are perfect—a stronger and more solid nourishment. If we should wish to make them drink milk, and eat soft herbs, the nourishment of the feeble, they would be dissatisfied, and assuredly with good reason, not being strengthened according to Christ." We must give them just the nourishment adapted to their case; for those aspects of truth which attract some, repel others; those which destroy some, save others. Here, indeed, is much wisdom needed, or our work will be marred. And here, too, "will be the scope for the preacher's judgment. The avenues are not the same to every heart; and, in proportion to his knowledge of human nature, will be his success in fitting his arrow to the string."*

Let it not, however, for one moment be supposed that I would substitute a vain phi-

* Bishop Sumner.

losophy for the plain Gospel of Christ—"the enticing words of man's wisdom," for "the truth as it is in Jesus." All I would urge is this : that since there is in the present day an increasing appetite for knowledge, and a hungering for mental as well as spiritual food, on the part of many of our people, the Ministers of our Church will be likely to lose much of their influence, if not prepared to satisfy this appetite, and give it a right impulse and direction.

But, besides Wisdom, it will also be found that *Discretion* is greatly needed. This will serve us in every department of parochial management. One day we have to calm down the impetuous ; another to give reproof rightly and seasonably ; another to heal the diseased in mind, or to administer comfort to the sorrowful, or to decide in a moment some question of more than ordinary difficulty. Doubtless, discretion without zeal is but a poor gift ; but the combination of wisdom and discretion with earnest zeal, is a most valuable feature in the ministerial character.

6. *Kindness* of heart and manner will give a charm to our ministrations. All can appreciate it ; and all who come under its influence

feel its power. "The Minister," says Vinet, "is a man of benevolence and compassion. Every one reproaches him if he displays hardness, avarice, coldness, unkindness. He is a man to whom God has said: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.' He is among men the representative of a thought of mercy, and he represents it by making it incarnate in his own life. To succor is the Minister's life."

A loving gentleness and benevolence should mark our whole demeanor. And this is quite compatible with Christian faithfulness. For it is possible to be bold, and yet tender; indignant against sin, and yet affectionately concerned for the sinner's soul. "I never seemed fit," said Payson, "to say a word to a sinner, except when I had a broken heart myself—when I was subdued and melted into penitence, and felt as though I had received a pardon to my own soul, and when my heart was full of tenderness and pity." The amiable Fenelon observes: "I would have every Minister of the Gospel address his audience with the zeal of a friend, with the generous energy of a father, and with the exuberant affection of a mother."*

* See Bridge's *Christian Ministry*, part iv. chap. vi.

It is often supposed that a Clergyman who is rich has a proportionate influence over his people. If by influence we mean *right* influence, I believe that he has not *the least more influence* for good than his poorer brother. I mean that money gives him no real hold of the *hearts* of his flock. If God has blest him with riches, he may, doubtless, turn them to good account, and may use them to His glory. But as far as his directly ministerial efficiency is concerned, I am disposed to think that the advantage they give him over his poorer brother is more in appearance than in reality. Kind words, and kindness of intention, in the long run go further than silver and gold. The one wins the affections lastingly and truly; whilst the other does little more than satisfy the wants of the moment. Take a lesson from St. Paul: "We were gentle among you (he says to the Thessalonians) as a nurse cherisheth her children; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the Gospel of God only, but our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." If we can only make our people see that we really care for them, we shall have gained much. There is seldom an individual to be found in our parishes who has not a

heart to feel ; and if we can but secure by kindness an influence over that heart, we may be made instrumental in moulding it, and thus save a soul alive. Mountains of difficulty may be got over, and the strongest currents turned into a right course, by a little gentleness. "Manner," said Bishop Middleton, "is something with all, and every thing with some."

7. A spirit of *Self-denial* should also be cultivated by the Christian minister. We should be ever willing to bear the cross. And as the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep, so should we give our time, our wills, our pleasure, our strength, for our flocks. We should be ready to share our Master's grief, as well as our Master's glory.

Let no one who has undertaken to be a standard-bearer in the army of Christ think that he is to lead a soft, easy life, like the general sample of the world around him. No, he must "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and engage manfully in the great contest. He should learn to give up his own pleasure for the good of others. He should be prepared to resign his own will to the will of God. He should be content to bear much, and to suffer much, if called upon to do so. He should be willing to be the least of all and the

servant of all, "that he may gain the more"—to toil and labor—to bear the cross, and follow his Lord through evil report and good report. "Our labor will be often demanded with considerable sacrifice of personal convenience. Thus it was with our Master. His food and rest were even foregone or forgotten in the immediate pressure. Seasons of necessary retirement were interrupted without an upbraiding word. Hunger, thirst, cold, or fatigue, set no limits to the determined forgetfulness of Himself in His Father's work."

Further, we must be ready to exercise self-denial by preferring, if needs be, a post of usefulness to one of mere comfort or profit. "There is no purer source of joy," says Bishop Sumner, speaking of the faithful minister, "than the affection of his parishioners. To be beloved of them for his work's sake, and to witness the acceptance with which his labors in their behalf are received, are the most precious earthly rewards he can enjoy. Yet he will sometimes find himself called upon to forego these delights. It may become his duty to deny himself the inexpressible comfort of living in the midst of an attached people. He must learn that it is not where his inclination would suggest, but where his services are most

needed, that, if the providence of God opens a way for his steps, he is directed to pitch his tent."

Again, says the same writer: "He must often renounce the benefits and comforts of spiritual communion. His taste would lead him to be much with those of his people who are like-minded with himself; to whom he looks as his future crowns of rejoicing. His easiest, as well as his most pleasant task, would be with them; but his concern for the welfare of those whose souls have not yet been awakened to a concern for themselves, will lead him to go after them, though they flee him. 'They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.' He must not select souls out of the whole number committed to his charge; he must be the pastor of them all; of the many erring and straying, as well as of the folded few." "It was this (spirit of self-denial) that led Neff to the dismal solitude of Dormilleuse, and shut him up with his twenty-five pupils, and urged him to abandon for a time those pursuits which were most congenial to his mind and habits, in order that he might lay a foundation of knowledge and happiness, and contribute something to the stock of general prosperity in a district which was separated from the

more habitable parts of the world by rocks and mountains, cold and sterility."*

Thus should the Christian Minister "deny himself daily." And the whole tenor of his ministerial life should be a course of devotedness to his Heavenly Master.

8. Though there are many other ministerial virtues which I must leave untouched, yet there is one more which I can not forbear mentioning; and that is *Consistency*. Our office is a sacred one; and we are consecrated persons. Men's eyes are upon us, and they will watch for our halting. They look for holiness in us; and if they see reason to suspect our sincerity, or if they feel that we live below our profession, their confidence will be shaken. "We are (writes Massillon) as lamps set up to give light to the house of the Lord; but from the moment the poisoned breath of the serpent has extinguished us, we shed afar a dense smoke, which obscures and infects every thing, and which becomes a savor of death unto those that perish. We are 'the salt of the earth,' destined to preserve souls from corruption, but which, when once it has lost its savor, corrupts that which it was intended to keep." "There is no

* Neff's Memoir, by Gilly.

surer way," says an old writer, "to infect the whole town than to poison the cistern at which they draw the water. 'Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?' Satan can tell—'I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of His prophets.' How shall the profane be hardened in their sins? Let the preachers sew pillows under their elbows, and cry, 'Peace, peace,' and it is done. How may the worship of God come to be neglected? Let Hophni and Phinehas be but scandalous in their lives, and many, both good and bad, will abhor the sacrifice of the Lord."

But when a man's life is marked by an even tenor of godliness, he is nearly sure to command respect for himself and for the office he fills. His abilities may be moderate, his powers small, and his position one of difficulty; still if he be consistent in his life, this will give weight and stability to his whole character, and effect to his ministry.

Consistency should embrace *steadiness of purpose*. The Christian Minister should not be found ever changing his plans and playing experiments on his parish—taking up a cause with warmth to-day, and then abandoning it to-morrow—acting from mere impulse. But there should be a consistent regularity—a calm uni-

formity—in his whole bearing. This will inspire confidence, and make men feel that he is one on whom they can reckon. There are many fixing their eyes upon the Christian Teacher, ready to detect every frailty, to note down every error in judgment, and every fault in practice: and most assuredly will they register it against him so soon as it is discovered, in order that they may seem to themselves to have some defense against his unwelcome admonitions. If, however, our people see that we are really in earnest, that our walk is close with God, and that our settled purpose is to do His will—if they observe that we are the same in church and out of it; the same on week-days as on Sundays; the same to the poor as we are to the rich; that all our actions are guided by the same religious principle; that our lives flow on in one undeviating and blameless course—then they will say that the gospel of Christ from our lips is not a mere empty sound, but a great reality.

In fact, it is no ordinary combination of qualities, and no ordinary amount of grace, that is needed to make a man an “able Minister of the New Testament.” These qualifications are beautifully summed up by Bishop Ken in the following lines :

“Give me the Priest, whose graces shall possess
Of an *Ambassador* the just address ;
A *Father's* tenderness ; a *Shepherd's* care ;
A *Leader's* courage, which the cross can bear ;
A *Ruler's* awe ; a *Watchman's* wakeful eye ;
A *Pilot's* skill, the helm in storms to ply ;
A *Fisher's* patience ; and a *Laborer's* toil ;
A *Guide's* dexterity to disembroil ;
A *Prophet's* inspiration from above ;
A *Teacher's* knowledge ; and a *Saviour's* love.”

If I should seem in this chapter to have taken a somewhat high standard of ministerial character, let no one be discouraged ; for we must aim high, if we would reach the mark. Be prepared to do *much* for God. Lay yourself out heartily to do His will, whatever that will may be. And be assured, He will not leave you. Abundant sources are open to supply all your need. Here is the promise—
“My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

CHAPTER V.

PREPARATION FOR THE PULPIT.

SINCE the Minister's is a solemn office, and preaching so noble a part of it, how important is his *Preparation* for this work ! I will notice a few points in order, which strike me as being the most pressing :

1. No one can write well, or preach well, who does not write or preach from *a mind thoroughly stored with his subject*. Our sermons may be well arranged, and may run smoothly ; but there will be a paucity of ideas—they will be vapid, and will be likely to fall powerless on our hearers — if our minds are scantily stored and our hearts have little to pour forth. We ought to feel as Elihu did : “ I am full of matter : the spirit within me constraineth me.”

The Christian Minister should be a man of reading, not only prior to his ordination,

but *ever afterward*. However abundant his labors may be, still a portion of time should, if possible, be reclaimed for the important work of keeping his own store replenished ; for without study his thoughts will soon become impoverished. He can not derive all the nourishment *from himself* : he must enrich his own thoughts by means of the thoughts of others. Without this he may make sermons, and even with great facility ; but they will all more or less resemble one another, and that increasingly. It is absolutely essential to a clergyman's efficiency that he should keep up a certain amount of reading. There are duties of the study as well as of the parish ; and " the man whose own mind becomes a stagnant pool can not supply his people with refreshing streams."

A clergyman, if he would really teach, must be *always learning* ; he must be ever acquiring knowledge. It is true, if he has an extensive charge, or is much among his flock, he will have only a limited time for reading. But let him remember that for his hearers' sake, as well as his own, he must not altogether neglect it ; otherwise he will soon have " said his say," and will degenerate into a mere utterer of commonplace. Let him remember, too, that

he is working, not for himself only, but for others; and that the knowledge which he may acquire by economizing and husbanding his spare moments of time, will, like the rain which has been laid up in little particles above, descend in showers of blessing on his people.

“Nothing (observes Professor Blunt) can be done by the Minister without *knowledge*. There can be no substitute for this. It is in vain to talk about the mint till you have secured the bullion. ‘Reading makes the full man.’ And surely, if a full man is wanted anywhere, it is in the Minister of a Church who is fixed to the same spot the whole year round; and who has to produce himself from week to week before the same audience. They have no option but to hear. They are in the condition of animals long tethered upon a bare pasture; they can not escape, but you must not be surprised if they show signs of impatience—give us liberty or give us provender—they are ‘hungry sheep’ that ‘look up, and are not fed.’”

“Take care constantly to keep replenished your well of information. Let it never run near the bottom, for then you are sure to give your people muddy instead of clear wa-

ter.”* St. Paul knew the advantage of a well-stored mind, and therefore, among other counsels which he gave to his young brother in the ministry, he says: “Give attendance to *reading*.”

Our studies may be either such as have a *direct* influence on our pulpit ministrations, or they may be of a more *general* character, but still having an *indirect* bearing upon our great work as spiritual teachers. We can not well dispense with either kind of reading; but *in no case* must the former be set aside—it is absolutely necessary for one who is to fill the hungry with good things.

Reading, however, may, like every thing else, be carried *to excess*. We *may* devote too much of our time and strength to it. We may become mere bookworms. And our people may be robbed of the hours which should be devoted to their more pressing wants. Reading may become an absorbing pursuit, instead of being a means to the great end we should ever have in view. Here, then, caution should be observed. For although learning is quite as needful for the ministerial profession as for any other, the search after it

* *Bishopric of Souls*, by Archdeacon Evans.

must never be allowed to draw us off from work of a more practical nature.

Again, much watchfulness is necessary as regards the books which we take up. In the present day so many stirring subjects are almost forced upon the mind, that there is danger lest we become too much interested in works of general literature; and so allow ourselves to be engrossed by that which will tend but little to render us useful in our ministry. We should, therefore, be constantly asking ourselves: In reading this book, am I likely to gather matter which can be made subservient to the great work which God has given me to do?

After all, it should be borne in mind that much of our time should be spent, not in our libraries, but among our people. The least act of a directly ministerial nature should appear in our eyes as more important than the most interesting research, and should ever have a paramount claim.

But there is one study which, as I have already hinted in a former chapter, should take precedence of all others, both as a preparation for the ministry generally, and for the pulpit in particular—the study of the Bible. In that book are stores upon stores of heaven-

ly wisdom. Here is our great armory, from which we must draw our weapons—the great storehouse from which our supplies must be derived. I believe that the man who knows his Bible well, who loves it, and is impregnated with its sacred spirit—though he may be defective on many other points—will still be a useful and efficient preacher. If we seek, like Apollos, to be “mighty in the Scriptures,” we shall, like Apollos, be “eloquent” in the highest and best sense. After all, remember that our ministry is essentially a ministry of *the Word*. And as the shepherd nourishes his sheep with the herbage which God has provided for them, so the nourishment with which the Christian Pastor feeds his flock is not his own poor word, but the Word of God.

There is another study yet, which I must not omit alluding to, for I believe it to be not a little conducive to efficient preaching—the study of *the heart*. The preacher should be well versed in the deep experience of his own heart, and he should make himself well acquainted with the hearts of others. This will give a charm to his discourses, and furnish him with copious matter for the pulpit. He who knows well the turnings and windings,

the depths and intricacies, the joys and sorrows, of his own heart, and has been in the habit of dissecting and anatomizing the human heart generally, will best know how to touch, and interest, and direct those who come to him for instruction.

2. The next point I would urge, as preparatory to the work of the pulpit, is, to *seek for a blessing from above*. Without this blessing, our preaching will be wholly in vain ; and it rests with God either to give or to withhold it, according to the good pleasure of His will. With all earnestness, then, should we wait upon Him for it. Our very hearts should " travail in birth till Christ is formed " in souls. God may awaken by means, and in ways, the least expected. We little know when, or how, He may bless. We little know what sermon may produce the greatest effect. Many a man has felt, during his preparation for the pulpit, a painful sense of his weakness ; he has composed his sermon with difficulty ; it has cost him much laborious effort ; and, after all, he has felt thoroughly dissatisfied with it. And yet, perhaps, that very sermon, with all its apparent poverty, may be found

to have produced more real effect than others which have been prepared with far greater facility and delight. And why? Because, perhaps, he has spent more time in prayer over it. Our real success depends on the dropping down of the heavenly dew. "I have been lately feeling (says a friend in the ministry) that our success, as ministers, depends more than we think on the fervency, faith, and frequency of our intercessions. If we steeped our sermons in prayer, and then preached, expecting to see our flocks converted, I believe we should have more fruit."

It is true, that many an idle man has abused the promise of Divine assistance, and has contented himself with a very slovenly preparation for the pulpit, under the idea that he could draw upon God for help at the moment when he stood up to preach. But what gracious promise has not been abused? We shall be altogether wrong to look for *miraculous* aid. We must not expect God's blessing to supersede our own exertions, but rather to rest on, and accompany, those exertions.

In thus recommending Prayer, I am quite aware how easy it is to offer the counsel, and how readily the reasonableness of it will be admitted; but who has not found how pain-

fully backward he himself is in his visits to the throne of grace? "It is easier (says one) to preach six hours *to* your people, than to pray one half-hour *for* them." Oh! remember that not one word we speak can be spoken rightly or to any good purpose; not one word can reach the heart, unless it be suggested, blest, and directed in its course, by the Holy Spirit himself.

It is said of Pericles, that, when he went forth to address the people, he prayed to the gods that nothing might go out of his mouth but what might be to the purpose. What an example for the Christian preacher!

Thus let it be our first care to plead with God, and then we shall be able to plead more powerfully with men. "The most mighty eloquence," says Bridges, "and the most devoted diligence, will be utterly inefficient, without the unction is brought down from heaven by frequent and fervent supplication. Prayer, therefore, is one half of our ministry, and it gives to the other half all its power and success." Let us never sit down, then, to the work of preparation, without first solemnly approaching God and asking Him to bless us both in preparing and preaching our sermons.

3. Another point to which I would call attention, is the habit of *postponing our preparation* for the pulpit. This is, indeed, as though we felt that our preaching was a thing of little importance — an affair to be soon over — a simply official matter. This is taking but a poor mean view of Christ's great ordinance. It can not surely be right to pen or plan one's sermon hastily on a Saturday night, with but little thought or care, and then to deliver it mechanically on Sunday, without earnestness or concern. Surely, this will not satisfy one who is about to preach for God and for souls, and who is really anxious to feed his flock and win them to Christ. It has been justly said, that "God will bless our *endeavors* : not our *idleness*."

Our sermons—even those before the poorest audience—should be thoroughly thought over, and laid again and again before God. And how can this be done in the press and hurry of a few hours? Time is needed to gather up and carefully arrange our thoughts for the great work of preaching. It is found by some to be a good plan (and it is one recommended by high authority) to settle, if possible, on Sunday evening the next Sunday's subject, so as to have it on our minds early in the week.

Others have felt it very desirable occasionally to sketch the plan of a sermon some time beforehand, and then to read on that or kindred subjects. This will suggest ideas. The views of others will pass and re-pass through our minds, till they become almost our own. They will also call forth, and set us on originating, fresh ideas of our own. And in this way will abundant matter accumulate around our text.

4. The *choice of a Text* is important. And here, too, prayer should be offered that God would guide us in our selection. The Text is a very material feature in the discourse, for many of our hearers will carry it away with them, and recur to it again and again, when their memory can retain but little else. Our object should, therefore, be either to choose a Text striking in itself, or one which may be shown to be so by our mode of unfolding it. Indeed, we should desire so to preach as to give a prominence to *God's* words rather than to *our own*—to bring them out in strong relief, whilst our own fall back—always remembering that the text is *God's*; the sermon ours.

There should also be due *variety* in the text and subjects which form the theme of our dis-

courses. We should endeavor to embrace the whole range of Scripture truth, and not confine ourselves to one particular phase of it—the favorite portion, to which our leanings tend.

Our preaching should sometimes be on *large passages of Scripture*; sometimes on *an isolated verse*, or a part of a verse. Both plans may be made profitable; and neither should be followed to the exclusion of the other. The latter is the more favorite method, and seems to be sanctioned by modern usage; for many preachers find it easier to speak to one point, and gather their matter round it, than to take in a wider range. This method also is perhaps the more striking of the two, and better calculated to arrest attention. But I think we give more actual *instruction* to our people, and supply them with more biblical knowledge, by setting before them occasionally some integral portion of God's Word, (such as a Scripture character, or a parable, or a part of one of our Lord's discourses, or lengthened clause in an epistle,) clearing it as a we go, and letting it leave its own impression on the hearers. Should a consecutive course of sermons on any particular part of the Bible be thought desirable, care should be specially taken not to let our course be too much spun out, lest

the attention of our people be exhausted, and their interest flag.

Again, having chosen our text, it is very desirable to adhere to it as closely as possible. The sermon should always be *upon* the text, and the text not a mere appendage or motto to the sermon; for if so, we shall be constantly getting into the same worn track, or else be introducing matter wholly irrelevant to the subject. Young Ministers especially need a caution on this head. They usually begin by taking a wide range in their few first sermons, as if desiring to give out at once all that their own minds have compassed. They are apt to wander discursively over the extended field of Christian truth. Thus dealing with *generals*, they soon find that, having said all that they have to say, their stock is completely exhausted. Whereas the man who dives into his subject, and grasps it firmly and *in detail*, will find that the more he preaches the more there is to be told; for God's Word is a great deep, and full of inexhaustible treasures.

It also frequently happens that in the course of our parochial visits we hear some religious want expressed, or some difficulty mentioned which has been especially felt. Now, it is often well to meet such cases; and thus subject mat-

ter is suggested for our sermons ; and oftentimes what meets the need of one will be found to meet the need of many.

I have myself derived considerable advantage from the habit of noting in a book, which I devote to this purpose, any passage of Scripture which may at the time strike me as being suitable to the wants of my people. Sometimes I have merely written down the text for after consideration ; and at other times I have drawn out a skeleton, and have added any remarks which have struck me at the moment. Thus I have had a little store from which I could draw at any time when in search of a subject. Such a plan I have no hesitation in recommending to my younger brethren.

5. There should be *Unity* in every sermon. And this should be the case, whether we preach on a detached text, or take a more extended range. Each discourse should, if possible, be on *one* distinct subject ; or at all events, there should be a *leading* subject in it, to which all others should be subordinate. This is the great beauty, and herein consists much of the power, of such writers as Chalmers, South, etc.—not as being exemplars of what our present style of preaching should be, but as being giants in their

own peculiar department of pulpit literature. Each of their sermons seems to have a distinct object, and every part, however varied, ranges around this one centre.

“There is no work of art in which this principle of *Unity* is not essential to perfection. The Architect studies the purpose for which a building is intended, while he adjusts its parts in his whole plan. He will employ what is called ‘the prophetic eye of taste.’ He will anticipate just what the principal edifice and the subordinate buildings will be when finished. It is not a fine column, or window, or gateway, that makes a beautiful edifice, but the combined effect of the symmetry and fitness which strikes the eye in the structure and its appendages, when viewed as a whole. Nor is that a profitable sermon which now and then startles the hearers with a vivid flash of thought, or makes them remember a few eccentric phrases; but that which fixes their eye on *a single subject*—which holds their attention steadily to *that subject*—which gives them, as they go on, a clearer perception and a deeper feeling of *that subject*—and finally compels them to remember *that subject*, though, it may be, they can not repeat one expression uttered by the preacher. . . .
 . . . A discourse should be adapted to produce

an effect *as a whole*. It is not enough that there is a succession of good words, or of striking sentences, or of brilliant paragraphs, or even of weighty detached thoughts. The choice and arrangement of matter should be such as to produce a growing interest in the auditors, and to leave a strong impression of *the subject* on their minds. . . . Such is that *Unity* which is worthy to be sought in the pulpit. It is not a sterile sameness; but it requires that a sermon should be one in subject, one in design, one in the adaptation of its parts to each other, and one in illustration." *

It is well, perhaps, before preparing a sermon, to ask one's self, What am I going to preach about? What is the leading idea in my text? What is the main lesson I wish to bring before my people? A Dignitary, who is no mean judge of pulpit efficiency, recommends the habit of giving *a definitive title* to every sermon, in order to insure its treating on some one prominent subject. We sometimes hear a sermon composed of two or three disjointed subjects, having little or no connection with one another. What is said may be well said upon each; but we do not find that harmonious whole, which makes a sermon really tell; and the congrega-

* Porter's *Lectures on Preaching*.

tion consequently goes away with nothing fixed or definite upon their minds. Such preaching is little calculated to feed; it will perplex, rather than instruct.

In speaking thus, I am aware that I may be accused of setting up too high a standard of excellence, and one which few have reached. But I feel persuaded that such a standard should be aimed at, and that it may be more or less attained by all.

6. Another consideration, bearing upon our Preparation for the Pulpit, is this—*How far is it legitimate to borrow from other authors?* We have often heard it said, that since there are so many good sermons in print, it would be well, at any rate, for a young and inexperienced minister to use them rather than his own crude compositions. But must a young clergyman's sermons be necessarily crude? If he is impressed with the high import of his work, his preaching, though perhaps faulty in its arrangement, and wanting in maturity of thought, in ease of expression, and in depth of spiritual experience, may still be effective. That which is the result of a man's own research and thought is far more likely to be uttered with fervor, and, under God, to produce an effect, than that

which is from another pen, however clearly and forcibly written.

The late Archbishop of Canterbury, in his work on "Apostolical Preaching," says: "The observation has been made, with more fastidiousness than good sense, that 'when there are so many excellent sermons in print, a man is inexcusable who delivers a bad one.' That, however, is a bad sermon, by whatever great name it is recommended, which has no effect on the congregation. Without entering at all into the general character of our printed sermons, among which it would be an easy task no doubt to find examples of all that is fervent in piety, splendid in eloquence, or sound in doctrine, I will venture to assert that no sermon, certainly no set of sermons, will be so useful to a congregation as those which have been originally composed for it by a preacher residing amongst them, acquainted with their spiritual state, and adorned with the qualifications already premised."

I would on many grounds then strongly dissuade a young clergyman from commencing his ministry by preaching the sermons of others. For if he begins by doing so, he will probably be tempted to continue the practice. And in truth, as George Herbert observes, "every

man's own is the fittest, readiest, and most savory to him." And if any one should find that he lacks the ability to compose his own sermons, then indeed can he be but little fit for the great work before him; and far better had it been for him not to have entered the ministry at all.

But to borrow ideas, or even passages, from other writers is a very different matter. It is surely permitted to us, yea, we are bound, to cull from every quarter what may be beneficial to our flocks. There is an art in making use of those contributions which come within our reach. The man who merely borrows matter to save himself trouble, without first giving it the impress of his own mind, will produce but a motley composition. His sermon will be of an uneven texture; and a keen eye will detect the patches. But he who borrows *ideas*, and even *matter*, from the writings of others, may so weave them into his own discourse, as to add pungency and force to it. A man of tact will turn to account all he knows. He will press every thing into the service of the sanctuary, and make it tributary to the great end he has in view. Like the bee which flies from flower to flower drinking in the peculiar sweetness of each, he will make all his varied reading, and

all his observations, contribute to enrich the store from which he can draw an almost inexhaustible supply.

Many have found the advantage of having a common-place book for this special purpose, as well as that previously mentioned; so that in the course of their reading, when they come to a passage in which any particular matter is well expressed or clearly illustrated, they may enter it there, and thus have a constantly enlarging fund for future use. This plan we shall find very useful, thereby gleaning and saving what would otherwise perhaps be entirely lost, and laying up as it were in a hive any precious honey we may gather.

With regard to *Commentaries*—we must not put them wholly aside, neither should we use them with servility. This was the resolution of a good man and a powerful preacher—“I will not forestall my own views, by first going to commentators. I talk over the subject to myself. I write down all that strikes me. I then arrange what is written. After my plan is settled, and my mind has exhausted its stores, then I turn to some of my great doctors to see if I am in error. But I find it necessary to reject many good things which the doctors

say: they will tell to no good effect in a sermon."

To despise the labors of holy and learned men, who have made the sacred Scriptures their special study, and to refuse to avail ourselves of their researches, is the height of folly. But to be flying to them on all occasions, instead of carefully examining the text of Scripture itself, and thus trying to ascertain the mind of the Holy Spirit, will make us but very unsatisfactory Biblicists, and but feeble Expositors of God's Word.

7. We should try to make the subject we are going to preach upon *primarily useful to our own souls*. "Our first business is to be our own pastor."* It is said of one who was a burning and a shining light: "He seems invariably to have applied for his own personal benefit what he gave out to his people. His ministry was so much a bringing out of views that had sanctified his own soul, that the healthiness of his soul was absolutely needful to the vigor and power of his ministrations."† A portion of Scripture, which we have thought much upon, which has "come to us not in word only, but in power," and has left its blessing with us, will

* Vinet.

† M'Cheyne's Memoirs.

be spoken of with additional effect to our people. Having passed through our own hearts, it will be the more likely to find its way to theirs. "How delightful would it be to us," says Bridges, "and how edifying to our people, to bring forth that Scripture as food to their souls, which the teaching of the Spirit of God hath opened to our own hearts in prayer. Truths that are obtained and wrought out in prayer have a peculiar unction." "Before I preached a sermon to others," said President Davies, "I derived good from it myself."

Oh! that this were our constant practice. Then there would be a tenderness and a sympathy in our preaching, which would give it a great charm and effect. Whilst preparing food for others, we should be feeding ourselves; and we, as well as they, should be drinking in the falling shower.

And even in the very *act* of preaching some have received a blessing themselves. Whilst addressing others, they have been speaking as forcibly to their own hearts and for their own profit. They have unexpectedly derived lessons from their own teaching. Whilst directing others to the fountain, its refreshing waters have flowed into their own souls.

It is essential to the production of a really

profitable sermon that the heart be in a right state, when we come to the work of preparation. If, on the contrary, we engage in it with a cold, mechanical spirit, we may bring forth something that shall be correct and sound—that shall neither violate the rules of composition nor the teaching of Scripture—but we shall fail in reaching our hearers' hearts. The discourse will want warmth and life: There will be the body without *the soul*.

Lastly, and above all, let us prepare each sermon *with an earnest desire that it may accomplish its own special work, and be productive of some special blessing*. Let us aim at *the heart*, and be content with nothing short of *its conviction and improvement*. Let us seek to be fully impressed with the awful jeopardy in which souls are placed, and *let us leave no effort untried to save them*. Each time this solemn resolution should be upon our minds—

“I'll preach, as though I ne'er should preach again ;
I'll preach, as dying, unto dying men.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE OBJECT AND SUBJECT OF PREACHING.

“THE Pulpit (observes Herbert, in speaking of the Country Parson) is his joy and his throne.” “He is then (says Erasmus) in the very height of his dignity, when from the pulpit he feeds the Lord’s flock with sacred doctrine.” And the same sentiment is forcibly expressed by a modern writer: “The Pulpit is our main battle-field. There we win triumphs, or sustain defeats. The angels have not such a throne. They can not cry, as we may, Believe, and live; receive Christ and be saved.” *

There is, perhaps, in the present day, a tendency in certain minds to undervalue the Ordinance of Preaching. It is true that the importance of it may by some have been over-rated; or rather the other public means of grace may have been comparatively depreciated. It is possible that in some cases people may have

* Archdeacon Law.

been led into the error of looking upon God's house as a house of *preaching*, rather than "a house of *prayer*;" and there are those whose religion is a religion of *hearing*, rather than a religion of *worship*. But whilst we are trying to right ourselves on this point, have we not need to be upon our guard, lest we run into the opposite extreme, and so lower and dishonor this ordinance of God? Surely the fault lies, not in exalting Preaching too highly, but in undervaluing Prayer. We would not then disparage the devotional part of Public Worship; yea, we would magnify it: but whilst so doing, we would set a high estimate on the preaching of God's Word.

The ministry of our Lord illustrates the importance of this ordinance. It was the great work for which He was anointed; in which He was constantly engaged; and for which He ordained His Apostles. Oh! what an honor has He put upon it, by preaching in the synagogues, in the temple, and by the blue waves of Galilee, under the canopy of heaven! He made, as it were, a sinful world his audience, and the whole earth his preaching-ground. This was the great work which employed Him and His chosen followers. And this is *our* great work also. It is true, that to lead the devotions

of our people, to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, to visit the sick, to relieve the distressed, and to watch over the little ones of the flock, is our duty; and if this be left undone, we can be no true Shepherds; but the proclamation of the Gospel seems to stand out in the Christian scheme with peculiar prominence. "Preach the Word"—this is our prime duty; it is second to none. The silver Trumpet is put into our hands; and woe be unto us, if we sound it not with all our energy! God hath committed unto us "the word of reconciliation;" and woe unto us, if we do not faithfully and earnestly deliver our message!

The souls of men are alienated from God; and this is the special instrument He employs for bringing them back to Himself. It is the engine which He is pleased to use, in order to move men. It is the great spiritual lever which He brings to bear on the dead, heavy mass, of which man's fallen nature is composed. We know that He uses other means also for the purpose; but this is emphatically *the* means appointed to bring men back into the right path.

I. Let us now consider what should be the grand OBJECT and END of all our preaching.

Mere *Popularity* should not be our aim. "In preaching," says Jerome, "study not to draw applause but groans from the hearers." We may be followed; we may be praised for our zeal or for our talents; we may have hundreds hanging upon our lips. And yet in the sight of God we may be nothing: the veriest stammerer may have a higher place in His estimation. Simon Magus was popular, for "all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God;" but he was a destroyer, and not a saver, of souls.

How sad to have entered the ministry from motives of self-interest, and to be impelled in a course of activity and apparent zeal only by feelings of vanity, and by a mere thirst for the praise of men! The object of such a Minister is not to exalt Christ, but himself; and he makes the pulpit a theatre, a stage, on which his self-love may display itself. After each sermon he may perhaps receive the admiring applause of his hearers; but, alas! no heart may have been touched, no soul awakened! He is satisfied, it may be, and is applauded by the ninety and nine persons who need, or think they need no repentance; but what if the stray sheep are still left to stray, so far as his efforts are concerned? "Verily, he has his

reward ;” but it comes not from his Heavenly Master.

And let me observe there is a danger lest this thirst for popularity should creep in almost without our being aware of it. And it may do so even with one who has begun to “run well,” who has started fair in the Christian race. All may seem to prosper with us for a time. Our sermons may appear to be successful and effective; we may be borne along on the flowing tide of man’s applause; we may persuade ourselves that we are doing a great work; and we may almost fancy that our only joy is in that work, and not in the *favor* we are winning. But all the while a spirit of self-complacency and a love of human praise may be the fictitious motive from which all our zeal flows, instead of a love for souls, and a desire to advance our Lord’s glory. “I dread,” said one lately gone to his rest, “I dread spiritual giddiness. Oh! may I be kept in a humble and softened state, feeling that the instrument is nothing, and Jesus all in all.”

The following advice was given by a celebrated preacher on the occasion of a young minister’s ordination: “Let me remind you, that when you come into this place and address the people, you are not to bring *your little self*

with you. No, when you stand in this sacred place, it is your duty to hold up your great Master to your people, in His character, in His offices, in His precepts, in His promises, in His glory. This picture you are to hold up to the view of your hearers, while you are to stand behind it, and not to let so much as your little finger be seen." This was the prayer of George Herbert: "O my Master! on whose errand I come, let me hold my peace, and do Thou speak Thyself, for Thou art Love, and when Thou teachest all are scholars."

A mere *display of human Learning* should not be the object of Preaching. If our flock is composed of simple and uneducated persons, it were an easy matter to impress them with a high estimate of our learning. A few grandiloquent words and high-flown sentences would win for us, perhaps, a character in their eyes for great erudition. But, oh! the folly and the cruelty of thus tampering with our people for our own selfish ends! And if our hearers are more educated, we may be tempted to make a parade of the little mental power we can bring to bear on our sermons; but we shall not by such means feed and save those committed to our keeping. There is something very

humbling to see one invested with so high a function as that of the Christian Preacher, thus trifling with men's souls, and trying to exalt himself at their expense.

We should not regard preaching as the mere *perfunctory discharge of a duty*. Some appear to compose their sermons with scarcely any higher feeling than that with which they would perform any ordinary task, instead of regarding it as a great and glorious work which bears upon the eternal interests of men. They seem to think that it is a thing which *ought* to be done, and *must* be done; and when it is accomplished, they are content with their performance. If they can but preach half-an-hour's sermon with tolerable propriety and acceptance, they are quite satisfied with what they have done. But this is not the preaching which God owns. Must we not say that it is an offense to Him, who came on earth to save the lost, and who employs us as His agents in the same great work? Should we not rather count it our highest honor to be the bearers of the Gospel message? Should we not earnestly and above all things desire to win men over to its acceptance?

The salvation of souls—this should be the

great object of our preaching. And how unspeakably important ever to keep it prominently before our minds! It is true that to save a single fellow-sinner is far beyond our power. But it is our high privilege to be *instrumental* in the work of salvation. The remedy is God's, but the carrying it to the outward ear and understanding is ours. We enter our pulpits with a *glorious message* intrusted to us, a *glorious aid* promised to us, and a *glorious end* before us. We preach to sinners; and if our word be blessed by the accompanying influence of the Holy Spirit, we may be the means of saving some of them. This must be the purpose for which we labor; and if we allow any inferior one to usurp its place, then is our office miserably abused. Thus to debase us will be Satan's aim. He will ever be suggesting to us lower motives in this, as well as in all our other duties. We must, therefore, be very watchful over ourselves lest this great ordinance of God be turned into an occasion of sin, and lest its great end be lost. And if prayer is needed (as I have already observed) in our preparation for preaching, should we not enter our pulpits also in a spirit of earnest supplication, that we may preach aright?

There are many ministers in our Church who preach scripturally and soundly, and who

are men of taste and power; but there is a dryness and coldness about their addresses, which has a tendency to lull rather than arouse. There is but little in their sermons to prick the conscience, or to win the heart. There is no fervor, no pungency, no life, in their preaching—nothing to make the hearer feel that he is undone, and must fly to the Saviour's bosom, and hide himself there. To listen to such you would suppose that those whom they were addressing were all on the heavenward path, and only needed a little information to guide them on their way.

The truth is, that, although we minister to professing Christians, a large portion of them are in an unconverted state. Do we realize this? Are our feelings sufficiently alive toward those who are in a condition of alienation from God? Do we long to bring them under the Gospel yoke? Do we yearn over their salvation? Do we lay ourselves out for their conversion?

There is a prejudice among some to the term *conversion*. I care not for the word itself—call it quickening, rousing, awakening, or what you please—but what we want is more of this element in our sermons. We want to see the careless alarmed, the worldly made thought-

ful, the lost saved. And for this purpose we do not want *great* Preachers, so much as *good* Preachers. I would draw a distinction between the two. A *great* Preacher may attract, interest, electrify his hearers; his sermons may feast the intellect; and men may be ready to shower down a torrent of applause upon him. But there, perhaps, the matter will end. On the other hand, a *good* Preacher is one who, with less mental acquirement, it may be, is skilled in the blessed art of winning men to Christ. His own heart is warmed; his own soul is quickened by the Spirit of God; and the consequence is, his words go straight to the souls of those whom he addresses. He aims at the salvation of his hearers, and, with God's blessing, he hits the mark.

A celebrated Preacher used to say: "I have admiration enough; but I want to see conversion and edification." And again: "I care nothing what people think of my abilities, if I may but be useful to souls. God knows, I do not want their applause: I want their salvation."

Every true and earnest minister will feel that each sermon which he preaches may be for the special good of *some* hearer. It may be for the awakening of one, or the comforting of another,

or for the building up of a third. In short, each time that he enters the pulpit, he will feel that God has a work for him to do by *that particular sermon*; and if he is not wanting on his part, that work will be done. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."

The effect of a sermon may not be immediately apparent; but if it be earnestly preached, assuredly some real result will be produced, and not the less so from its being undiscoverable by our eye. Let us ever remember that we stand up in our Master's name—that we have a message from God to our people—and that, as we speak to the outward ear, He can bring the word home to the heart.

It has been well suggested, that every sermon should in some part of it contain such a plain statement of the Gospel plan of salvation, that a casual hearer may in that sermon, if he should never hear another, find an answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" It may be thought difficult to do this, without forcing

into the discourse matter irrelevant to the subject treated of; but in practice it will not be found so; for all Scripture, directly or indirectly, testifies of Christ, who is the sum and substance of the Gospel. How few texts are there that suggest themselves to the notice of the Christian teacher, in the full treatment of which he is not almost necessarily led to revert to those salient truths that accompany salvation! So that bearing in mind that each sermon may be to one or more of our hearers the last and only opportunity of listening to the word of life, we should preach it with all earnestness of aim, and with an ardent and hopeful desire to bring some sinner to Christ.

Salvation then, and nothing less, should be the grand object of our preaching. The slumberer is to be disturbed—the hard heart touched and melted—the wanderer brought back—the ignorant instructed—the seeker encouraged—the faithful believer “built up in his most holy faith.” Blessed, happy work! The power is God’s, the instrumentality ours. We are His servants; He employs us to “plant” and “water;” but reserves to himself when and how He shall “give the increase.” “We have this treasure,” says the Apostle, “in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

II. What should be the great SUBJECT of our preaching? This question has already been incidentally answered; and one single word will not only give a *sufficient* reply, but also the *truest* reply, to this all-important inquiry. The subject-matter of our sermons should be CHRIST. He must be the Foundation, and also the Top-stone, of our spiritual building—the Alpha and Omega of our preaching—“the inspiring principle of our ministrations—not one subject among the rest, but that which involves the rest, and gives to them their proper life and interest.”* Christ, and salvation through Him, should sparkle like a jewel in every sermon. “Happy the Christian minister,” says Bishop Horne, “who, like St. John, lives only to point out this Saviour to his people!”

The proclamation of Christ—this is the great duty of the Christian Preacher. Without this no wisdom of man can avail for winning souls. He must be uppermost on our lips—the key-note of every sermon—the chief ingredient in the cup of salvation, which we hold out to our thirsting people. He must be the prominent feature in every landscape, other objects taking their place in the background. The Apostle’s

* Rev. C. Bridges.

rule should be our guide—"We preach *Christ crucified*;" "I am determined to know nothing among you, save *Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*." How thoroughly Christ formed the main theme of the preaching of His earliest Ambassadors is nowhere shown more plainly than in the simple account given us of the teaching of Philip. It is said he went down to the city of Samaria, and *preached Christ* unto them." And again, in the same chapter, (Acts 8,) referring to his intercourse with the Ethiopian Eunuch, it is said: "He began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him *Jesus*."

And here I feel that I may profitably quote the words of one who is now usefully employed in the work of the ministry: "For the first years of my ministry (I say it even with tears) I knew not what it was to act *for Christ*. Entering on the work earnestly, and individually apprehending the Lord Jesus, still I did not realize that it is *for Christ* I am to prosecute my work, and my aim is to lead souls to Him. I reasoned with the people—urged many motives—tried to bring them to church—chose startling passages—preached essays on life's uncertainty—if the text mentioned Christ, spoke of Him—on such occasions as that of His birth and death, spoke of Him at large—at other

times, when He appeared not in the text, thought not of making Him appear, or thought that was not the time: to talk of Him would be forced and uncalled for. What was the result? The work, as far at least as the public ministry, stood still; sinners were not awakened; souls remained 'dead whilst they lived.' It pleased God to show me the defect—Christ was wanting; Christ must be all in all. I rejoice in hope that, since he has been 'lifted up,' souls have 'passed from death unto life,' and are being drawn to Him. I can testify thankfully, that as far as my own heart is concerned, I have received a new impulse for my work, which is as a spring within me, I trust never to fail."

The wonderful and blessed effect produced by the preaching of the cross among the Greenlanders has often been spoken of. At the commencement of the first Christian mission among them, it was thought desirable to speak only of the being of a God, and the duty of his creatures toward Him. But all this while, as Crantz informs us, the poor Heathen were bound up and frozen like their own icy mountains. But in reading to them the affecting scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, the heart began to melt in tenderness, contrition, faith,

and love. They begged to have the story repeated, and it was to them as life from the dead.

Much the same course was pursued among the North-American Indians, and with a similar result. The following is the striking testimony of one of the first converts: "Brethren," said he, "I have been a Heathen; therefore I know how Heathens think. Once a Preacher came, and explained to us that there was a God. We answered: 'Dost thou think us so ignorant as not to know that?' Another Preacher began to teach us, 'You must not steal, lie, nor get drunk,' etc. We answered: 'Thou fool, dost thou think that we do not know that?' And thus we dismissed him. After a time, Brother Christian Henry Ravel came into my tent, and sat down by me. He spoke to me nearly as follows: 'I come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He sends to let you know that He will make you happy, and deliver you from the misery in which you lie, at present. To this end He became a man, gave His life a ransom for men, and shed His blood for us.' I could not forget his words. Even while I was asleep, I dreamt of that blood which Christ shed for us. I found this to be something different to what I had ever

heard ; and I interpreted Christian Henry's words to the other Indians. Thus, through the grace of God, an awakening took place among us. I say, therefore, Brethren, preach Christ our Saviour, and His sufferings and death, if you would have your words to gain entrance among the Heathen."*

It is of vast importance for the Christian Teacher to be himself clear on the great doctrine of Christ's atoning sacrifice. He who is defective on that cardinal point can not but fail in his ministry. No sheep will be gathered, and brought home to the fold, by his labors ; no resurrection of the dry bones will take place under his ministry. This is the only preaching that really tells on the heart. Other preaching may attract and win applause—it may lead men to give up certain sins, and engage in certain duties—but this alone *wins souls*.

“ It has been remarked,” says James, “ that even the polished, but pointless, Blair kindled into something like a glow of pious warmth when he came, which he seldom did, within the attraction of this object, (the cross.) And though it was but as moonlight compared with the ardor of his colleague Walker, yet in his

* *Loskiel's Missions to the North-American Indians.*

sermon on 'the Death of Christ,' his frigid eloquence became enlivened by his theme."

And here let me explain what is meant by *Preaching Christ*. To preach Christ is not to state the bare abstract doctrine that we are saved through His blood-shedding; but to hold Him up as a living, loving Saviour, who is ready and waiting to save the lost. It is to speak of Him as a *personal* Saviour, and to show that there is no salvation for any child of man but by a direct and individual application to *Him*.

The preaching of the past century was strongly marked by the absence of distinctive doctrinal statements. Modern preaching has, perhaps, erred in the opposite extreme. In our anxiety to set forth a sound code of truth, we have been directing men, for example, to *the naked formula of justification*, rather than to *Him by whom we are saved*, and who all the day long stretches out his arms to receive the returning sinner. We have been teaching them, perhaps, to trust to *a system*, instead of reposing in *a personal Saviour*. We are forgetting that even the Gospel system, however accurately set forth, whilst it fills the head, may at the same time leave the heart empty and desolate. To teach Christ is to exhibit

His great sacrifice on the cross, as the full atonement for sin ; His example in all the beautiful reality of His earthly life ; and His actual existence in heaven, as our everlasting, ever-present Lord, in whom is all our light, and life, and peace. We should accustom our people to regard Him, not merely as the great Author and Founder of Christianity ; but as the substance of Christianity : not as a mysterious Stranger, who once visited this earth on an errand of mercy, and is now passed away and gone ; but as an Almighty Friend, and most merciful and beloved Brother, who is ever present to bless, and comfort, and support His people.

But let it not be supposed that whilst we are urging the importance of *preaching Christ*, we would have every sermon like its fellow—that there must necessarily be a dry monotony of ideas in all our discourses—that we must be forever harping on one string—that we must be always presenting precisely the same phase of truth, and clothing it in the same language. No, the early Preachers of the Gospel did not teach thus. The great Apostle of the Gentiles did not confine himself within such narrow limits. He took a far wider and more varied

range. And so shall we, if we would set before our people "all the counsel of God."

Neither again let us suppose that to preach Christ is merely to introduce His name continually into our discourses. It is very possible to make often mention of the Saviour's *name*—to speak much *about Him*—and yet not to *preach Christ* after all.

In fact, it is utterly impossible to preach Him to others unless we know Him, and value Him, and enjoy Him ourselves. Let our own souls be inoculated, and imbued, and steeped with Gospel truth; and then all our sermons will have "a sweet savor" of it. Let us realize our common ruin; let us know from our own experience the joy of pardon, and of our acceptance and life in Christ; and then there will ever be a freshness in our mode of directing others to "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

Are there among our hearers men living in sin? We must show them its awfulness, by the amazing price paid for our redemption from it on the cross; and lead them to humble themselves before God in deep repentance. Are there men loving the world? We must tell them of a better love which can fill their hearts—the love of Him who gave Himself for

them. Are there some penitent and contrite ones, who have come to God's house burdened with sin, and longing for relief? We must lift up Christ before them, a bleeding, suffering, pardoning Saviour, whose blood can cleanse from the foulest stains. And, besides these, are there not some of His own faithful followers before us, who need to be built up, and strengthened, and encouraged? We must exhort them to live daily, "looking unto Jesus;" and to strive after that holiness which marked every step in His earthly career.

"Must nothing be preached but Christ?" inquires an old writer. And he answers: "Nothing but Christ, or that which tends to Christ. If we preach threatenings, it is to cast men down, that we may build them up. Whatever is done in preaching to humble men, it is to raise them up again in Christ. All makes way for Christ. When men are dejected by the law, we must not leave them there, but raise them up again. Whatever we preach, it is reductive to Christ, that men may walk worthy of Christ. The foundation of all Christian duties must be from Christ, the prevailing reasons of a holy life are fetched from Christ."*

* Sibbs on "Christ Preached to the Gentiles."

Whilst, however, we speak of thus exalting the Saviour in our preaching, we must also enforce the need of the Holy Spirit's agency in the great work of salvation. We must hold Him forth as "the Lord and Giver of life," the mighty quickener of souls—who can alone convince the heart of its utter sinfulness, and take of the things of Christ, and display them to the sinner's view—who alone can impart that holiness, and meetness for heaven, without which no man can see the Lord. Where there is a deficiency in putting forward the work of the Spirit, there must be a meagreness and want of life in our sermons; the waters will remain unmoved, and there will be no sinners healed; the Word will rest upon the surface, and not reach the soul within.

But let it not be supposed that in speaking thus I would exclude or undervalue that preaching which is called *practical*—which would set forth the evils resulting from sin, and urge the culture and exhibition of every Christian grace. This style of preaching is not only allowable, but most important. The whole tenor of the Epistles shows us that such was the method which the Apostles commonly adopted; and we want no better model. He

who is always dwelling on doctrines, to the omission of practical duties, will be likely to gather around him a number of barren leafy professors, rather than of holy fruit-bearing believers. In fact, as has been often observed, the truest style of preaching is to set forth doctrines practically, and practice doctrinally. "Our aim," says a modern writer, "is to be doctrinal without losing our hold of earth, and practical without losing our hold of heaven."

Whilst, then, we would carefully observe the due "proportion of faith," and give to each part of God's truth the position and importance which it claims, we should remember that there are certain leading doctrines which should have a special *prominence*. Christ must be the *prevailing* theme of our preaching — the salient feature in our sermons — Christ the Remedy, the Foundation, the Hope, the All. He must be the Sun of our ecclesiastical firmament, and round Him as the centre must every lesser light revolve. Leave Him out, and the very soul of our preaching is gone.

I feel I can not sum up what I have to say on this head better than in the following beautiful and forcible language of Bishop Reynolds: "Preach Christ Jesus the Lord; determine to

know nothing among the people but Christ crucified: let His name and grace, His spirit and love, triumph in the midst of all the sermons. Let the great end be to glorify Him in the hearts, to render Him amiable and precious in the eyes, of his people; to lead them to Him as a sanctuary to protect them, a propitiation to reconcile them, a treasure to enrich them, a physician to heal them, an advocate to present them and their services to God; as wisdom to counsel, as righteousness to justify, as sanctification to renew, as redemption to save, as an inexhausted fountain of pardon, grace, comfort, victory, glory. Let Christ be the diamond to shine in the bosom of all your sermons.”*

* Bishop Reynolds on “Preaching Christ.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE MANNER OF PREACHING.

A VOLUME might be written on this wide and important subject. But I must try to compress what I have to say within as small a compass as possible. I shall, in this chapter, confine myself to the points which seem to refer rather to the *externals* of preaching; and reserve those which more directly concern the Preacher's *inner man* to the next chapter.

1. Our sermons should not be merely *read*: they should be *preached*. This may seem a commonplace remark, but it is a very needful one. Whether sermons are written or unwritten, they must not be delivered as an essay *in the audience* of the people, but be spoken *to* them. We should not only feel that we have a message to deliver; but further, there should be something in our manner which shows that nothing short of its actual *reception* is our object.

And here the question at once arises, Which

is the most desirable mode of preaching—the *extemporaneous* or the *written* style? This is a question which from the very nature of the case is open to much difference of opinion. Doubtless a good written sermon well delivered is far more effective than a moderate one preached extemporaneously. Doubtless God will own and bless either method, if the contents of the sermon be according to His truth, and if it be spoken as from Him. Some of our most useful and stirring Ministers preach from manuscript. But I much doubt whether the written style is the *highest* style of preaching. Neither is there any Church, I believe, in which this practice prevails to so great an extent as in our own.

“We are losing a powerful weapon,” says a modern writer, “we are yielding an incalculable vantage-ground, in neglecting the use of earnest and, if possible, extempore preaching. Why should the Church yield what every sect, school, or system, have used with advantage, and have clearly seen they can not part with? The wisest philosophers have given rules for the use of eloquence. The destinies of nations are influenced by its power. The life of the criminal quivers in the scale, while a tone of eloquence, or a pathetic sentence, is being utter-

ed. We can spare no weapon which is found to affect human nature. While the lecture-room of the Socialist, the Infidel, and the Demagogue, resound with fervid eloquence which wins the attention of multitudes, why should the Church and her clergy yield such an instrument to be worked by their antagonists with such portentous and alarming efficacy? If it wins hearts, let us win hearts by it."*

The need of this seems to be felt in the Church of America. In a recent report made to the General Convention, the following sentiment occurs: "It is submitted to the serious and calm consideration of this House, whether, with all the lights of past observation and experience before us, it be not wise to recommend to our ministers, as an important means of enhancing their usefulness and efficiency, the cultivation of a habit of extemporaneous address and of expository preaching, at least during one portion of the Lord's day. We see no reason why a minister should not in this way present to the consideration of his congregation the high and concerning truths of the Gospel, and enforce them by its awful sanctions, as effectively, as persuasively, and as convincingly as a lawyer

* Rev. E. Munro's "Parochial Work."

states and argues his case from his brief at the bar." A private Minister of that Church thus expresses himself: "Our clergy must learn to preach without writing. I know the objections that scholars and rhetoricians will urge against the extempore method; but all are not scholars and rhetoricians. For the mind of the masses, the extempore method, with all its crudities and repetitions, is undoubtedly the best."*

I am confident that no great amount of natural eloquence is needed to make a fair extemporary Preacher. What we chiefly require is a thorough knowledge of our Bibles; a heart filled with the love of Christ, and with a lively concern for the souls of those whom we address; and careful and thoughtful preparation.

An extempore Preacher will have an advantage, in being able to extend or curtail his sermon, according to the amount of attention he observes in his hearers. And he will thus be furnished with the best chronometer to graduate its length. It has been remarked of a written sermon: "You may see, perhaps, that it does not tell—you may feel that you are throwing away words—you may catch the vacant eye,

* Dr. Bowman's communication to the Commission appointed by the General Convention.

the suppressed yawn, the consulted watch : but it matters not—on you must go. The appointed number of pages lies before you, and you must get through them. The listlessness of your congregation reacting upon you, your manner becomes heavier, your matter in consequence duller, and you come down from the pulpit feeling that you have changed a means of grace into a temptation to sin.”

There is some truth, I fear, in this. And hence, perhaps, *one* reason for the drowsiness of some of our congregations, and the preference shown by many of our poor for the more exciting sermons to be heard in the meeting-house.

But let it not be supposed for a moment that in seeming to advocate extemporaneous preaching, I am advocating *unprepared* preaching. Extemporaneous preaching need not, and if likely to be effective will not, be extemporaneous thinking. The subject must be well digested, and the matter clearly arranged in the mind ; and then to clothe it with words will be a comparatively easy matter, provided we are content with those which naturally present themselves.

In a recent Charge, the Bishop of Oxford states his own view on this point : “ I believe the best course generally, is to preach once each

Sunday a, written and once an unwritten sermon. But when I say an unwritten sermon, I by no means mean one which has been committed to memory; nor, on the other hand, one which is the mere pouring off of the first frothy surface of our minds; but one which, though the fresh utterance of the moment, is the product of thought and study and prayer."

Many will not, perhaps, readily subscribe to these views. Neither would I put them forth, as though they must of necessity carry conviction with all. This is a matter on which there may well be diversity of opinion. Written sermons, perhaps, are most in accordance with the taste of many in this country. Doubtless souls are won by that method, and the great object of preaching is effectually carried out. God is not tied to particular means; and He has, and does, make use of many a writing Preacher to convert and save sinners.

Archbishop Secker, after discussing the question of written and extemporary sermons, recommends "written sketches, combined with extemporary delivery, as a middle way used by some of our predecessors;" and adds: "Perhaps, duly managed, this would be the best. After all, every man, as the Apostle saith on a different occasion, hath his proper

gift of God, one after this manner, another after that. Let each cultivate his own, and no one censure or despise his brother. This, too, was Mr. Robinson's judgment of the matter, who, with a decided preference for extempore preaching in his own case, "taught his people to relish either, and to consider book or no book as one of those circumstantials, in the fulfillment of the ordinance, which was of secondary, or rather of no moment."*

"Upon the whole, (says one who was a wise, as well as a good man,) I much prefer speaking to writing; but upon this condition—that the speaker read much, write much, think much, and pray much. As for those speakers who know not their subject till the Bible is opened in the pulpit, their preaching must be deplorable."

With regard to a young minister, it may be well that he should at first confine himself, in his *pulpit* ministrations, to written sermons; gradually fitting himself for a freer style of address, by cottage lecturing and other means.

Whether, however, a sermon be written or unwritten, the point I would urge is, let it be *preached*, and not tamely delivered, as though you felt little or no interest in it yourself, and

* Archbishop Secker's Charges; Robinson's Life, quoted by Bridges.

were indifferent as to whether it interested your people. It should convey the idea suggested by the proclamation of an important Message from a Sovereign to his people: it should be felt to be the great overture of mercy, in which God beseeches men *by us* to be reconciled to Him.

It is very desirable, too, that a sermon, if written, should be read over several times (and perhaps aloud) before it is delivered. This will produce a certain readiness; and the Preacher will thus feel at home with his subject, and throw himself completely into it. And he will be freed from that slavish dependence on his manuscript, which would keep his eye constantly riveted to its pages. By these means a written sermon may have many of the advantages of an unwritten one, without some of its disadvantages.

George Herbert wisely remarks: "When he (the Parson) preacheth, he procures attention by all possible art; both by earnestness of speech — it being natural to men to think, that where is much earnestness there is something worth hearing — and by a diligent and busy cast of his eyes on his auditors, and with particularizing his speech now to the younger sort, then to the elder; now to the

poor, and now to the rich—‘This is for you, and this is for you’—for particulars ever touch and awake more than generals. Sometimes he tells them stories and sayings of others, according as his text invites him; for them, also, men heed, and remember better than exhortations, which, though earnest, often die with the sermon, especially with country people, which are thick and heavy, and hard to raise to a point of zeal and fervency.”

The happy art of sustaining the attention of a congregation is indeed an acquirement worthy of our aim. †

2. Next, I will speak of *Distinctness of Enunciation*, as one of the externals which are essential to the formation of a good and useful preacher. Many are indistinct without being aware of it. Many, again, do not sufficiently consider that there are the deaf and the distant among their hearers, and that there are some who for want of mental power are quite incapable of supplying the lost words in a sentence. Foolish flatterers are not wanting to tell them that they are sufficiently audible and even more so than others who enter their pulpits, when in truth much of what they utter fails to reach the ear.

It may be well to insert here the remarks of a great authority on this subject: "It is erroneous to suppose that the highest pitch of voice is requisite, to be well heard by a large assembly. This is confounding two things materially different—loudness, or strength of sound, with the key-note with which we speak. The voice may be rendered louder, without altering the key; and the speaker will always be able to give most body—most persevering force of sound—to that pitch of voice to which, in conversation, he is accustomed; whereas, if he begin on the highest pitch of his voice, he will fatigue himself, and speak with pain; and whenever a man speaks with pain, he is always heard with pain by his audience. To the voice, therefore, may be given full strength and swell of sound; but it should be always pitched on the ordinary speaking key. A greater quantity of voice should never be uttered than can be afforded without pain, and without any extraordinary effort. To be well heard, it is useful for a speaker to direct his eyes occasionally to some of the most distant persons in the assembly, and to consider himself as speaking to them. But it must be remembered, that speaking too loud is peculiarly offensive. Distinctness of

articulation is far more conducive to being well heard and clearly understood, than mere loudness of sound.”*

Mr. Simeon's instructions to young clergymen on this subject are very valuable. He always cautioned them against speaking in an unnatural and artificial voice. “I perceive,” he said, “that almost every minister in the pulpit speaks in a voice which he never uses on any other occasion; and I am well assured that it is that which makes sermons in general so uninteresting. You will remember that a whole discourse is to be delivered; and if you get into an unnatural key, you will both injure yourself and weary your audience.”

Another fault, which is especially observable in young preachers, is that they do not economize their voice, or employ it to the greatest advantage. Sometimes they speak needlessly loud, and at other times almost entirely drop the last words in a sentence. Again, they do not sufficiently vary their tone of voice; and this will make the best address tiresome to him who delivers it, and uninteresting to his hearers.

It is of such great moment, especially in ministering to an unlettered flock, that you should be generally heard, that I would re-

* Blair's Rhetoric.

commend you to select some wise and confidential friend, and ask him to tell you plainly if you are audible or not. And if, after all pains have been taken, and even professional advice obtained, you should find that your voice is unequal to your church, it may be desirable to seek another post, to which your physical powers are better adapted.

The management of our voice is a matter which may seem to be below the consideration of a minister; but how useless will our most labored public ministrations be, if they reach not even *the ears* of our people!

3. *Brevity* is another point which I would venture to recommend. It has been observed, that when a man has no design but to speak plain truths, he may say a great deal in a very narrow compass. The generality of sermons are too long. Many a man wears his congregation, and needlessly exhausts himself. "Nothing," says Lamont, "can justify a long sermon. If it be a good one, it *need not* be long, and if it be a bad one, it *ought not* to be long." If a written sermon were compressed within the space of *five and twenty minutes*, and never allowed to exceed *thirty*, this would in most cases be desirable. An unwritten one, from be-

ing in general not so concisely worded, might be *five or ten minutes longer*. I am speaking of ordinary parochial sermons.

The usual custom of approaching the main subject by a tedious introduction had better, in most cases, be dispensed with. Unless it be a subject in which it is needful to clear the way, it is generally better to proceed at once to the great truth to be proclaimed. It is not an uncommon fault, however, in young ministers to choose a subject sufficiently large for two or three sermons, instead of one; and, not content with this, they then occupy in loose, prefatory remarks, a large portion of the time allotted for the discourse, which is too precious to be wasted in wearisome preliminaries. The consequence is, that such sermons are usually diffuse and pointless. It is said of Cecil, that he was ever on the watch not to weary. He would say: "You have a certain quantity of attention to work on. Make the best use of it while it lasts. The iron will cool; and then nothing, or worse than nothing, is done. If a Preacher will leave unsaid all vain repetitions, and watch against all undue length in his entrance, and width in his discussion, he may limit his sermon to half an hour."

Of course, there is a due moderation to be

observed. It is as possible to be too short, as to be too long. It is sad, indeed, sometimes to see the solemn work of the pulpit hurried over, as though the Preacher attached little or no value to the golden opportunity given to him. The matter is too grave to be precipitated. With this caution I would commend the following advice: "Believe me; I speak from experience, from long experience, when I say, The more you utter, up to a certain point, the less will your hearers retain; the less the matter, the more will they profit. Instead of filling the memory of your audience, you overpower it, as lamps are extinguished by a superabundance of oil, and plants are destroyed by too much watering. When a discourse is too long, the conclusion obliterates the middle of it from the memory, and the middle the commencement." *

4. Our Preaching should be marked by *Simplicity*. It should be natural, without any forced strain at oratory. We should be so fully possessed by our subject, and so engrossed by it, that there should be no room for "the small dishonesties" of studied eloquence. There should be nothing artificial, either about our

* Francis de Sales.

words, our matter, our manner, or our voice; no frothy grandiloquence, no attempt to soar above our own level, or that of our audience. "Virtue," says Burnet, "is so good in itself, that it needs no paint to make it look better; and vice is so bad, that it can never look so ugly, as when shown in its own natural colors. So that an undue sublime in such descriptions does hurt, and can do no good." Again, it has been remarked, that "the truth itself is momentous; and what is added in the way of mere embellishment is in itself powerless. It is like the embroideries and embossments of a soldier's garniture, which add nothing to the vigor of his arm."

Cecil gives us the following anecdote, and upon it grounds some wise counsel: "A learned Doctor,* who once delivered before the Lord Mayor a very eloquent and elaborate sermon, may have thought that he preached well. But he must have felt himself reprov'd and instructed, when a poor man pulled him by the sleeve, and told him that he had understood nothing of his sermon. There was an appeal in that poor man's breast to nature. Nature could not make any thing of the doctor's learning. Beware of the temptation to acquit your-

* Dr. Manton.

self learnedly. Beware of preaching *to the great pews*. Preach for the lowest; and remember it was said of Him who is our pattern Preacher: 'The common people heard Him gladly!'"

Some Preachers, whilst they profess to feed their people, only starve them by giving them food which they can not digest. Would it not be mockery for a messenger to go from his prince with a message of pardon to a condemned criminal, and to use language which was above his understanding? And yet such is the folly of which those ministers are guilty, who put their heavenly message into such a dress of words, as to make it unintelligible to the mass of their hearers. Who can believe that man to be really intent upon saving souls who labors only to make his sermons attractive on account of the tinsel and glitter with which they are decorated? Truly our work is too solemn and too important, that it should be encumbered by any such frivolous appendages. "I could as soon believe a physician were intent on saving his fellow-creatures from death, who, when the plague was sweeping them into the grave, spent his time in scattering over his patients flowers and perfumes, or writing his prescriptions in beautiful characters, and classical latinity."*

* James's "Earnest Ministry."

In aiming at Simplicity, however, we must avoid dullness and commonplace. Our sermons, though easy to be understood, need not be jejune and vapid. They may be so plain as to be intelligible to the lowest, and yet be full of interest to all. There should be strength and nervousness, both of ideas and language. They should be abundantly enriched, too, with appropriate illustrations, that the people may the better apprehend what we say, and carry away the truths which they have heard. No illustrations are more beautiful and effective than those taken from home-life. See how copiously our Lord used them, and His apostles after him. The fisherman's net, the corn, the reapers, the fowls of the air, the hen with her brood, the shepherd and his flock, the soldier in his warfare, the wrestler in his contest, etc., are all pressed into the service of the Gospel, and beautifully illustrate its truths.

Illustrations and comparisons commend themselves, especially to the minds of the young and less educated. And surely we may be plain and homely, without being vulgar; and our style may descend to the level of the simplest thinkers, and yet be instructive and acceptable to the more advanced portion of our hearers.

In fact, one who is to minister to a mixed congregation must lay aside some of his habitual mode of thought and style of expression. "He must descend from the high and lofty tone of language to which he is accustomed, to walk in the humble terms of Scripture. He must limit his rounded periods to the extent of vulgar comprehension; he must abound in interrogations and addresses which the rules of composition condemn in writing, though the rules of nature sanction them in speaking."* It is well also to make a large use of Saxon words and Bible words; for these are the most readily intelligible, being most in use among the people.

St. Paul declared himself "a debtor to the learned and unlearned." And truly, *both* have a claim upon us. Now, it certainly is a great art to be able so to speak to the latter, as to interest and instruct the former. And yet this is to be attained. But how is it with the generality of sermons? Are not many words employed to which the common people affix either no meaning or a false one? We should, many of us, be surprised to find how extremely limited is the vocabulary *ordinarily* employed by a family of the lower class.

* Archbishop Sumner's *Apostolical Preaching*.

Now, considering how far the usual language of sermons exceeds that margin, is it too much to say that oftentimes one fourth of our words are those not in common use among the poor? And if this be the case, how difficult it must be for them to carry away a fair impression of the average run of sermons which they hear! I know they can understand many words which they do not use themselves; but still, in the majority of sermons, how many words and ideas are far out of their reach!

I would venture to mention, by way of example, a few words which are not unfrequently made use of in sermons; but to which I question much if the majority of our hearers, in country parishes especially, attach any definite meaning: "inference," "illustration," "analogous," "synonymous," "metaphorical," "destiny," "definition," "argumentative," "retribution," "vicarious," "gratuitous," "irrelevant," etc. The list might be almost indefinitely extended. Without doubt it is far easier for a preacher of classical education to make use of such words than to substitute for them others of simpler sound and import. But to use language which shall be clear to all is well worth the effort; and a little care and pains will soon make it comparatively easy.

Plain, intelligible language is what we should aim at. We should never use a difficult word, when an easy one will express our meaning. Augustine asks : " Of what use is a golden key, if it will not open what we wish ? And what is the harm of a wooden one, if it will accomplish this purpose ; since all we seek is to obtain access to what is concealed ? " It is by conversing with our people, that we find out what words and phrases are really adapted to their understandings. The language used in ordinary conversation is our natural language ; and if men would but confine themselves to such language, their sermons would be both more intelligible and more weighty. Even in our city churches, a larger amount of earnest simplicity is greatly needed. Then there would be more hope of numbering among our congregations the poor and uneducated, of whom there is oftentimes now so painful a dearth. They need teaching in language that they can understand ; and if they find it not in our churches, many will stay away, or seek it elsewhere.

A plain, vigorous, pointed style, that will attract and command the attention, is what we want. But is not this, for the most part, still a desideratum among us ? Without it how can we hope to fill our churches, and

to evangelize the masses of English heathenism?

It will probably be objected by some, that there is no small difficulty in preaching simply. No doubt this is the case. "It is not difficult," says Archbishop Usher, "to make *easy* things appear *hard*; but to render *hard* things *easy*, is the hardest part of a good orator and preacher." Still the difficulty may be mastered, and a facility may be acquired by practice. And any labor we expend in attaining this object will be amply repaid by our increased usefulness. Indeed, it is the very triumph of our powers to make truth simple and acceptable to ignorance; and it is, perhaps, the highest style of elegance to be able to write well, and yet to employ a simple style—to express ourselves perspicuously, and yet without effort. It has been well said, that simplicity is the truest mark of a well-trained mind, and that it takes all our learning to make things plain. South remarks that "there is a majesty in plainness."

I would advise, then, my younger brethren in the ministry, if they would wish to be generally understood, to converse much with the poor, to study their characters, and their type of thought, and in every sermon to bear in mind that these form *the bulk* of their hearers.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MANNER OF PREACHING.

(CONTINUED.)

HAVING spoken in the last chapter of some few of those characteristics which belong rather to the *externals* of Preaching, I will now proceed to notice those which more immediately concern the Preacher's *inner man*.

1. There should be *Warmth* and *Earnestness* in our Preaching. With the finest theme in the world before us, with all the hopes and anxieties which agitate the human breast, during the brief period which separates the cradle from the grave, as our subject, many of us fail to produce the effect that we are justified in looking for. It is not purer language, or a more finished style, that is wanted; nor do our sermons in the present day, generally speaking, fail in a sound exhibition of the truth; but what seems to be lacking is animation, warmth, life. We want burning thoughts, couched in simple and unvarnished language,

such as those which, in earlier days, drew men from earth to heaven. It was said of a certain stirring Preacher, that "his ideas came hot from his heart." This it is that makes preaching real and powerful.

We speak for eternity — we plead for Christ — we exhort men to be saved. But the souls we speak to are, many of them, asleep, and need rousing; and what so likely to awaken them as an earnest and stirring appeal to their conscience? The fire should kindle within us. Without this, the best matter, arranged in the most correct style, will utterly fail in effect. "We have to deal with a dead, heavy *vis inertiae* of mind; nay, more, we have to overcome and move a reluctant heart." It is not only the head that wants convincing, but the heart that needs to be touched by the Gospel truths we exhibit; and if these be not exhibited with warmth and earnestness, how shall we move our hearers? "Strike," says Bishop Wilberforce, "as one that would make a dent upon their shield of hardness—yea, and smite through it to their heart of hearts. Speak straight to them, as you would beg for your life, or counsel your son, or call your dear-

est friend from a burning house, in plain, strong, earnest words."

We must bear in mind, too, that men are not only in a state of sleepy indifference, but are in actual *danger*—that the mass of our hearers are, in fact, sacrificing the interests of their souls to the cares and vanities of the world—that many of them are blindly bent upon their ruin, and are rushing on toward the precipice from which they will take their fatal leap into perdition. And is it not a solemn thing to consider the fearful jeopardy in which we find such men, and how much their salvation may depend on the words we speak to them? Hell is before them. Jesus Christ stands forth to save them from rushing into it. He sends us to proclaim His love for sinners, and His ability to save them. Oh! then, if we feel the value of souls, can we do otherwise than speak earnestly, if, by any means, we may save some?

"Can we be satisfied," says a Christian writer, "with merely explaining, however clearly, and demonstrating, however conclusively, the truth of revelation? Should we think it enough coldly to unfold the sin of suicide, and logically to arrange the proofs

of its criminality, before the man who had in his hand the pistol or the poison with which he was just about to destroy himself? Should we not entreat, expostulate, beseech? Should we not lay hold of the arm uplifted for self-destruction, and snatch the poison-cup from the hand that was about to apply it to the lips?"

In many sermons of the present day there is a lack of sharpness and point; consequently they do not cut, and but a faint impression is made. There is but little pricking of the conscience—but little probing of the heart—little that makes men cry out, in the anxiety of their souls: "What must I do to be saved?" There is too often a want of living reality also—that reality which a deep sense of truth ought to impart. It is told of Garrick, the celebrated actor, that being asked by a certain Prelate to account for the fact, that his acting produced so much greater effect on men's minds than that which ordinarily followed from preaching, he replied: "*We speak that which is but fiction, as if it were reality; and you speak that which is real, as if it were fiction.*" Shame to us that it is so! Shame to us that we are oftentimes forced to cede the ground to others, who have fewer advantages,

but perhaps more zealous hearts than ourselves !

To rivet the attention of our hearers is no easy matter ; but it is one of primary importance, if we would be useful to them. And I believe that no Minister would lack words capable of reaching and arresting the conscience, if only they came forth as the exuberant expression of real earnestness and feeling. "Many preachers," says the writer just quoted, "do not come *near* enough to men's hearts. They speak as from a distance—from too high a standing-point—and therefore men do not feel that *they themselves* are addressed. They theorize too much. They make statements without applying them, and forcing them home to their hearers' consciences. There should be a close connection maintained between the preacher and his audience, by the frequent introduction of the pronoun '*you*;' so that each may realize the thought that the discourse is actually addressed to *him*." It is for want of this directness that our sermons do not penetrate, and reach the mark we are aiming at. They are like distant parleys, rather than close and pressing conferences. There may be no lack of force in our

words; but the key is wanting which shall unlock the inner chambers of the heart.

A spirit of earnestness constituted the main power of Whitefield's preaching. "There have been men," remarks Bridges, "of like unction, faith, and prayer—men whose views of the Gospel have been equally comprehensive, and whose love for souls has been equally fervent. But it was the expression of his whole soul portrayed in his countenance, the solemnity of his address, the deep feeling from within bursting through at every pore, streaming in his eyes, and breathing an energy of love into the effusions of his overflowing heart, which convinced the listening throngs that he was not trifling with them." George Herbert recommends the "dipping and seasoning all our words and sentences in our hearts, before they come into our mouths, truly affecting and cordially expressing all that we can say, so that our auditors may plainly perceive that every word is heart-deep."

It is said that, during the Revolution, an obscure man rose up one day to address the French Convention. At the close of his address, Mirabeau eagerly inquired who the person was. The man to whom the question

was put wondered at Mirabeau's curiosity. Upon which the latter said, "That man will yet act a great part;" and added, on being asked for an explanation: "He speaks as one who believes every word he utters." So will it be with the Preacher. He who feels himself will make others feel.

Whilst, however, I would plead for earnestness as a main element in the Preacher's usefulness, I would not encourage the calling up of an earnestness *that is not felt*—an artificial earnestness put on for the occasion. Some persons are naturally cold in manner. What I would urge upon such is to strive against this constitutional defect, by constantly keeping it before them, and by putting as much life and fervor as they can into their *ordinary intercourse with others*: thus, by degrees, a warmer glow will also characterize their *pulpit ministrations*.

Neither let *vehemence* be substituted for earnestness. "Nothing," says the writer quoted above, "can be more repugnant to the simple dignity of the ministerial character than attempts at theatrical display, or affectation of emotion, that has no correspondence with the heart. Preaching is not, as some appear to consider it, the work of the lungs or the

mimicry of gesture, or the impulse of uncontrollable feeling; but the exercise of love, the spiritual energy of a heart devoted to the care of immortal souls." The truth is only weakened by a strained violence of either tone or gesture. The minister must feel what he says; and then fervency will become his natural manner. To speak burning words, his own heart must first burn. Here then is the secret of genuine earnestness. When our own hearts are deeply interested, there can be, there will be, no coldness in our manner.

But it will happen that the most earnest minister of Christ will feel cold *at times*. There will be variations in the spiritual temperature of his heart. Sometimes he will enter the pulpit with his spirit chilled and enfeebled. He will feel altogether a lack of energy and power. What is to be done under these painful circumstances? Ought he to be content to preach tamely and feebly; or should he endeavor to work himself up into a tone of fervor as he proceeds? The former, I think, is by far the best alternative; it is the most honest. Let us in such a case be satisfied with being quiet, rather than impassioned. Let us be content to *speak*, rather than to *preach*. God may

be graciously pleased to enable the *feeble* sparks which we emit to fall upon hearts which He Himself has prepared to receive them. Surely, to *assume* a warmth which we do not ourselves feel, must always be hurtful to ourselves, and unacceptable to God.

I have been here speaking of an exceptional case — not of that condition of mind which has lapsed from warmth into general coldness, and from earnestness into indifference. When this becomes our state, we have much reason, indeed, to implore of God, that He would rekindle a bright flame within us, lest our people speedily suffer by our deadness, and partake, in some measure, of our cold and cramped feelings.

Let our preaching, then, be fervid and earnest, if possible. But, in any case, let it be *real*, and proceeding from a heart touched “with a live coal from off the altar.”

2. We should preach with *Fearlessness* and *Decision*. Sinners are to be rescued — the careless to be warned — God’s people to be kept in the narrow path. We must not flatter. We must be plain, bold, and faithful. St. Paul’s advice to Titus was: “These

things speak, and exhort, and rebuke, with all authority." We may be gentle, and yet firm; tender, and yet decided. We may well feel our unworthiness to stand up in our Master's name, and a holy awe when we consider the greatness of our work; but this is quite consistent with boldness in delivering His message. It is said of Luther, who braved the anathema of the Roman Pontiff, and who was one of the boldest and most uncompromising of preachers, that he was wont to ascend the pulpit with trembling knees. This arose from a humble consciousness of his own deficiency; and to be *thus* weak is to be strong indeed. But there is a timidity which amounts almost to distrust, and which is very unbecoming in a minister of Christ. There is a faltering and undecided manner of putting forth the truth, which leads his hearers to feel that he does but half believe his own sentiments. How different was the spirit which St. Paul longed for, when he asked for the prayers of his brethren, that "he might speak *boldly* as he ought to speak"!

"Look at two witnesses giving their testimony from the witness-box — the one decided, and the other not — and mark the

difference. The effect on the jury would be, that the one would be believed, the other discredited. And may not those witnesses stand as types of the Christian ministry? What is the effect of a man standing up in the pulpit trembling, hesitating, and uncertain? Will that man be likely to carry conviction to the minds of his congregation? Will they be likely to believe what he says to be true? On the other hand, let a man stand up boldly and say, 'This is God's truth—thus saith the Lord;' and how different will be the effect!"*

We can hardly deliver our message too boldly, so that it be in the spirit of love. Men will not thank us in eternity for not having spoken out. No, they may praise us now; but they will curse our flattery in that world from which a few plainly spoken words might have rescued them.

3. Whilst our preaching is bold, it should at the same time be full of *Love*. Love is an important ingredient in every sermon. This is the magnet that will draw all hearts to us. Love begets love; and an affectionate manner has a tendency to attract and win. "The

Christian Pastor, of all men in the world, should have an affectionate heart. When he preaches it is the Shepherd in search of the strayed sheep—the Father in pursuit of his lost child.”* It has been beautifully said of our Lord, that “when He looked down upon the congregation He saw everywhere His brother, His sister, and His mother.”

If we do indeed love our people—love their souls—and feel a deep concern for their well-being, both in time and in eternity, there will be that in our preaching which will enlist attention for the great truths which we deliver. Whereas, if we use harshness, we shall talk to little purpose. The poet Cowper could well appreciate the tender persuasiveness of Christian love. “If,” said he in one of his Letters, “a man has great and good news to tell me, he will not do it angrily. It is not, therefore, easy to conceive on what ground a scolding Minister can justify a conduct, which only proves that he does not understand his errand. No man was ever yet scolded out of his sins. His heart, because it is corrupt, grows angry, if not treated with some management.” And it is when we weep for those who can not

* Simeon.

weep for themselves, when we warn men with all affection, and tell them of their sins plainly, but yet in love, that we find icy hearts melting, and hard hearts softening. "I ceased not," says the Apostle, "to warn them night and day *with tears.*" Of course the *affectation* of this feeling is nauseous, and it is soon detected; but to *feel* it is the readiest way to men's hearts.

This spirit is especially needed when we are called upon to deal out *reproof*. To speak plainly in such cases is our duty; but the truth may always be "spoken in love." And we may show that like as a Father is grieved when he chastens and reproveth his child, so it truly pains us to wound the feelings of any one of our people. In dealing out reproof, however cautiously, we shall sometimes meet with opposition and repulse. But we should not allow this to irritate us. It should rather send us to our closets, to mourn in secret over their hard-heartedness, and to devise new plans for reaching them with success. Only let us show that this is the desire of our hearts, and men will bear much from us. Let us cultivate more of a spirit of love and affection. Let us seek from God more of this in our every-day life. He Himself must implant it in our

souls; and then it will be apparent in all we say and do. Massillon, whose sermons breathe such a savor of this Christian grace, says: "The Pastor ought to speak by his heart—by the yearning affection of his inmost soul. We soon learn to speak of that which we love. The heart has much more abundant supplies than the memory, and has even a language of which the memory knows nothing. An earnest, holy Pastor, influenced by God, and interested in the salvation of the souls intrusted to him, finds in the liveliness of his zeal, and in the overflowing abundance of his heart, expressions which are given to him by the Holy Spirit far more adapted to touch and reclaim sinners, than all those utterances which may be suggested by labor and by the vain devices of human eloquence. Do not then say any more that you are not sensible of possessing any talent. You are not asked to possess the talents of an Orator, but those of a Father. And what talents can a Father need, in order to speak to his children, but his tenderness of love for them, and his desire to do them good?"

4. A feeling of *Sympathy* between a Preacher and his Hearers should be evident. A Clergyman's ministrations, and especially

his preaching, are the connecting link between him and his people. If he really cares for them he will interest himself about their wants, and will try to meet those wants. And this will be sure to show itself in his sermons. He should speak as one who knows the inner thoughts and workings of the hearts of those whom he is addressing; and he should show that he is fully aware of, and can appreciate, the deep yearnings of their souls. He should let them see that he can appreciate their joys, that he is aware of their trials, and can feel for them in their difficulties—that he desires to put himself in their place, and rejoices to be the bearer to them of the remedies they need.

Sermons equally adapted to *all* congregations usually strike home to *none*. Hearers should feel that each discourse is their personal property—that it is for *them*—and that *they* were in the Preacher's heart when he prepared it. And since there are shades of differences in all congregations, and no two are precisely in the same state, there should be a corresponding adaptation in all preaching—its matter and style should not be stereotyped.

Our sympathy should also be shown by an occasional allusion to local and passing events, in which the congregation may happen to be

specially interested. This will sometimes have a happy effect. But it must be done in moderation; and great care should be taken to avoid such personal allusions as will cause irritation, and give offense. The arrow may be so skillfully shot, as to strike many consciences; but it must not be evidently aimed at any *one* individual.

5. The Preacher should have *Faith in his message*. We should believe that God sends us—that the Gospel we preach is His gospel, His remedy for man's disease, His message to a fallen world—that it is "the power of God unto salvation." We should believe that God will give His promised blessing, and that souls, however dead, may at His command rise to newness of life. This faith it was which gave so much power to the Apostles' teaching. They could stamp it with the broad seal of their own assured experience. "We believe, and therefore speak." And it is this that will give a tone of confidence and hopefulness to our manner, and force to our words. The moment we allow a feeling of distrust to lay hold of our minds, our power of carrying conviction is weakened, our prestige is gone, and we can no longer speak as authoritative teachers.

But whilst we have faith in our mission, and feel that Christ Himself has sent us, we must be careful lest a spirit of presumption and self-importance should intrude. Oh! if we always bore in mind that we are instruments—only instruments—in the hands of an Almighty One, we should think less of ourselves, and throw ourselves more simply upon Him; remembering the Apostle's humbling and yet inspiring thought: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

6. In addition to what has been urged, I would say: Above all, let the *Minister's life agree with his preaching*. "There is ever a disposition among people," says Vinet, "to imagine that the standard of the Gospel, as set up in the pulpit, is something higher than man can be expected to attain to; whereas they regard the Preacher's *life* as the reality and practical abatement which they are to follow as a model." Bishop Hopkins observes, that "a minister should not only be a director, but a leader; he should not only point out the way, but walk before his flock in it." The *preaching life*—this is what we want. It has been rightly said: "Either teach none, or let

your life teach too." The Sunday sermon lasts but half an hour; whilst a holy life is a continual sermon all the week long. Indeed, as Massillon remarks, "the only Gospel many people read is *the life* of the minister."

And then, for our own sake, what can be more truly sad than to preach a Gospel which is not influencing our daily walk—to speak of avoiding sin; when as yet we have never learnt the happy freedom from its bondage—to set forth a Saviour of whose real preciousness our own hearts are ignorant—and to describe a heaven toward which our steps are not turned? And yet how very possible it is for a Minister to be in this sad position! There is many a man who has carried a precious treasure without any share in it himself; or been the bearer of an important letter, without knowing its contents! Many a Light-house has been erected on the Goodwin Sands, which has served as a beacon to hundreds of ships sailing by, and yet has itself been engulfed in the deep. What if it should be so with us? Let us lay the Apostle's warning to our heart: "Lest that, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

It has been said by an old writer: "That

man is a bad preacher in the pulpit who is not a good preacher out of it. We should preach by what we *are*, and not by what we *say*." "Believe me," says another writer, "it is easier to declaim as *an Orator* against a hundred sins of others, than to mortify one sin as *Christians*, in ourselves—to be more industrious in our pulpits than in our closets—to preach twenty sermons to our people than one to our own hearts." "Nothing," says Baxter, "is more indecent than to hear dead souls preach the living truths of the living God." I cannot forbear quoting the following words of the holy Leighton: "He who can tell men what God hath done for his soul, is the likeliest to bring their souls to God. Hardly can he speak *to* the heart who speaks not *from* it: *Si vis me flere*, etc. How can a frozen-hearted creature warm his hearers' hearts, and enkindle them with the love of God? But he whom the love of Christ constrains, his lively recommendations of Christ, and speeches of love, shall sweetly constrain others to love him. Above all loves, it is most true of this, that none can speak sensibly of it but they who have felt it. Our most elegant pulpit orators, yea, speak they with the tongues of

men and angels, without the experience of this love, are no fit ambassadors for Christ."

An insincere Christian must ever be an offence in the sight of God; how much more so an insincere Minister! God seems to say to such an one: "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?" The words of such a preacher "go out of feigned lips." And how can he look for a blessing upon his work? It is possible that God *may* use the medicines, which are dispensed by his unworthy hands, for the healing of others; but what warrant has he to expect a blessing on his labors? Could he even dare ask for it? It is but a polluted offering; and a holy God "cannot away with it."

His very hearers, too, will soon begin to suspect him. For there is a testing power in the minds of a Christian audience, that is ever desiring to ascertain if he who speaks to them is indeed himself influenced by the truths which he lays before them. For if not, then will his words fall powerless on their ears; and his most eloquent and searching appeals will glide off their hearts. If a truth be merely taken up theoretically, or from expe-

diency, it will only float upon the minds of our people, and will probably leave no impression. But when a truth lives in the Preacher's heart and life, and is constantly about him as the glory is about the sun, then it will indeed have a prevailing influence over the minds of others.

Who can say with what power those truths will come from our lips, which have been prayed over upon our knees in secret, when all that they condemn in ourselves has been lamented, and when all that they teach has been attempted in our own life?

Happy those ministers whose manner, tone, and character, are such as to create a predisposition on the part of their hearers to receive the word from their mouths! Happy those who can enter the pulpit, feeling that they heartily love the message which they are going to deliver. Such will, indeed, be blest. Few Preachers have borne about them the stamp of holiness more clearly than M'Cheyne. After his death, an unopened note was found on his desk, written by one who had, a few days before, heard the sermon which proved to be his last. It was to this effect: "Pardon a stranger for addressing you a few lines. I heard you

preach last Sabbath evening, and it pleased God to bless your sermon to my soul. It was not so much what you said, as your manner of speaking it, that struck me. I saw in you a beauty of holiness I never saw before."

In closing this large subject of Preaching, I feel that of necessity much has been left unsaid. I can hardly offer a better summary of a Preacher's duty than in the following terse directions, which are mainly gathered from the Bishop of Carlyle's *Advice to Preachers* :

1. Get a clear view of your text, by comparing it with the original, and with the context.
2. Avoid a display of learning: criticise in the study; teach in the pulpit.
3. Divide your subject: it helps the hearers.
4. Speak in short sentences: it helps the Preacher.
5. Use plain words, and simplicity in construction.
6. If preaching from notes, do not overload them with matter: and remember that one text to prove a point is often better than several.

7. Avoid parentheses: they trouble the speaker; they puzzle the hearer.

8. Speak in the first person singular: it gives reality. Avoid the first person plural: kings speak thus; preachers should not.

9. Apply pointedly; rebuke boldly; warn lovingly; encourage heartily.

10. Preach frequently with your tongue; always by your life.

11. Honor the Holy Ghost.

12. Remember your Master. Seek His glory; not your own.

CHAPTER IX.

PAROCHIAL WORK.

VISITING THE FLOCK.

THE visiting of our people is scarcely less important than the preaching to them. The one is dealing with their souls collectively in groups; the other is bringing our ministry to bear on them individually. And the one is subsidiary to the other; for never was there a truer saying uttered than this: that "a house-going clergyman makes a church-going people." "A Pastor deceives himself," says Quesnel, "who thinks that he has done his duty by merely ascending the pulpit, and preaching a sermon. He must put every means in operation for saving a soul: cast after cast—all must be tried. And true love for souls will make all these labors easy." We find the following passage in Weitbrecht's Memoir: "A friend at Bath lately wrote to me: While you aim at great things for the Lord, yet keep in view the

arithmetic of heaven's exalted joy: 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth.' We must not only cast our nets in hope of a great multitude of fishes, but put in a line and hook even for one." We should often think of the pains our Lord and Master took with one single sinful woman at the well of Sychar. That Minister who would limit his duty to the church walls, or his visits to those who summon him, takes but a narrow view of the work apportioned to him. The Church, in her Ordination Service, makes larger requirements. She would have her Ministers "seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ forever."

A sermon, however forcible and striking, will often fail to arrest a soul, when a word spoken in private may have a most powerful effect. The person then feels that we are speaking directly *to him*. Thus oftentimes we reap richer and more plentiful fruits from our visits, than from our public teaching.

Again, though men may be aroused by our public appeals, something more is need-

ed to bring the work to perfection. We must follow them to their homes, and speak to them in private. In preaching we bend the bow, and God is oftentimes pleased to direct the arrow of conviction to some heart. And that heart may bleed inwardly. There may be deep feeling. The soul may be severely exercised. In such cases there is need for much affectionate attention and anxious care. We should follow up our public work by individual counsel and advice. We should go after the stricken deer. The sheep in distress should be sought for, and gently led to Him who can relieve them. Thus may we, by God's blessing, further the work so happily begun by the preaching of the word.

In reference to *ourselves* also, Visiting will tell very beneficially upon our Preaching. It will show us the real wants of our people. We shall also thus discover the character of their minds. And this will force upon us the necessity of preaching simply, to which I before alluded; for I believe we shall in no other way be made fully conscious how needful such plainness of speech is. It is only by visiting our people that we shall discover how extremely limited in

many cases is their actual amount of knowledge, and their capacity for receiving more. And thus, also, we shall make further discoveries, such as the faintness of the boundary line which they too commonly draw between sin and holiness; and how much fewer of them than we are apt to imagine (especially of the men) make a regular practice of reading God's word, and addressing Him in prayer.

And is it not most important that the parochial Minister should be fully conversant with all this? Without such knowledge it is clearly impossible that he can suit his teaching to his people's wants.

Besides, if in going in and out among our people we learn to regard them as *Friends*, and to feel that there is a common nature between us, this will react upon our Preaching, and give a warmth and reality to it.

Pastoral visits should be of two kinds—*General* and *Special*.

First, there should be a *General Visitation* of the parish continually going on—a periodical call on every family, if possible, whether in sickness or health. And experience tells us that the Clergyman is almost always a welcome

visitor. It is an unusual thing for him to find it otherwise. "Few are there," says the Author of the *Bishopric of Souls* "with whom you can not keep open the door of friendly and pastoral communication by a truly Christian conduct—to rudeness opposing gentleness, to intemperance patience, to railing blessing." There will be exceptional cases, where both the Gospel, and the messenger who bears it, are regarded as unseasonable visitors. The Chief Shepherd, we know, "came unto his own, and his own received him not;" and shall the servant expect to be more favored than his Master? In such cases, and happily they are few, patience is our duty. And it is well, perhaps, that our pride should be lowered by such trials, and our faith exercised. Still, we may say that the instances are rare, in which a Minister is repulsed, when he comes in the guise of Christian affection.

Of course there will be occasions when more than ordinary tact is needed. In some cases our object would be marred by introducing with abruptness the main subject of our visit: the soil must be prepared a little to receive the seed we are about to sow on it. We must to a certain extent study the peculiar habits or temperament of the individual into

whose house we enter. Still, a little knowledge of human nature, and a willingness to adapt ourselves to the ways of those to whom we minister, will be pretty sure to make us useful and welcome visitors.

How often it happens that among our flock there is here and there one desiring to have a few words of private conversation with us. And if we do not throw ourselves in his way, he will not have the courage to make a formal application to us. He may be longing for a word or two of instruction, or advice, or encouragement, from us; and it is by a ministerial call that such an opportunity is often happily afforded. It is thus, in the secrecy and stillness of pastoral intercourse, the poor man fully feels that his sorrows, his cares, his burdened conscience, his doubts, his highest concerns, are a matter of as deep interest to his Minister, as are those of the rich and noble.

In these visits it is not enough to show an interest in the mere *temporal* well-being of those with whom we converse: *the soul* must engage our chief attention. We must labor to carry the Gospel home to each individual heart. A living Prelate of our Church has these stirring words in one of his Charges: "Remember that you have *a real work to do*. Let this thought be

always with you. Go out to visit in the parish, not because you ought to spend so much time in visiting your people, but because they have souls: and you have committed to you, feeble as you are, the task of saving them from everlasting burnings. When you talk with them, beware of the dreamy listlessness which would decently fill up some ten minutes with kindness, and good words—inquiring as to their families, their work, their health—ending possibly with a formal prayer. But say to yourself, *Now must I get into this heart some truth for God. Be real with them.*”

We have in our parishes to deal with persons of various characters, and in various states of mind. And here, as I have already remarked, the young Minister will acquire his most valuable knowledge of human nature; and he may well feel that each heart is a study of itself. And here too is much need of skill; for, as a spiritual Physician, he must know the nature of the disease, and be able judiciously to apply the remedy.

It is, indeed, a mistake to imagine that Parochial Visiting is an easy part of our ministerial duty. If you have hitherto supposed it to be so, it will be well to get the

idea out of your mind as speedily as possible.

To make our visits telling and profitable, we should not undertake them without earnest prayer for God's special guidance and counsel, and some previous thought and preparation. When these are dispensed with, we shall almost invariably find that our conversation is desultory and wanting in point, and our remarks commonplace and powerless. "It is rather strange," remarks Osterwald, "that Ministers should take so much pains to prepare their discourses for the pulpit, and take so little pains to prepare for what they should say to the sick, or how to conduct their visits to them, though it is one of the most difficult and important offices in the ministry."

It may be well, in each round of visits, to have some one predetermined and definite point in our own minds, which may serve as a nucleus around which our remarks may cluster. Or, in each case, a special topic may be suggested by the impression left upon the mind by the previous visit. Or, again, some family circumstance which has recently occurred, may prompt the desired subject for conversation. This will give a character to

our visits. And it is always desirable, where we can, to leave something striking and instructive on the minds of our people—something that will afford them matter to think about, and dwell upon, afterward. It is not surely enough, that they should feel our conversation to have been harmless and agreeable; but it should be directly profitable, so that they may learn something from it. They should not merely have reason to remember that they have received a visit from a kind Friend, but from a Minister of Christ—from him who is set to watch over their souls.

In our parochial visitations we are often liable to be turned from our purpose by the tendency of some to dwell on their neighbors' faults; or to occupy the time by recounting their own bodily ailments; or by harping almost entirely on their peculiar privations; or by unfolding their own views of truth, instead of regarding our visits as a fresh means of instruction. In dealing with such cases, we must carefully avoid any thing like irritability of manner, and exercise patience; but at the same time we must persevere in carrying out the object of our visit. Thus we should soon lead

even such persons to gather some real profit from our domiciliary ministrations.

Secondly, there is a *Special Visiting* which seems to have a still more pressing claim on the attention of the Clergyman.

If we know, for instance, of any parishioner being in *an awakened and inquiring state*, it is important to go at once and give him a helping hand. He needs counsel and direction; and a little well-directed advice may speed him on his way, and steer him through many difficulties which beset him in his course. Many a one in this state has lapsed into dissent, or fallen back into carelessness, from lack of advice and guidance, just at this critical moment.

Again, we hear of another *growing cold*, who "did run well." Possibly a word in season may recall him. He may need warning or encouraging; and this may be for the saving of his soul.

We may find another *perplexed with difficulties*. He has either taken a wrong view of some passage in God's Word, or has misunderstood some statement made in the pulpit, and his mind is harassed by it. Now, half an hour's private conversation with a

person in this state may do much to correct mistakes, to convey instruction, to relieve solicitude, and to settle doubts.

In such cases, it is desirable that the spiritual Guide, whilst he speaks with all faithfulness, should also use *great tenderness*. This will inspire confidence. The heart, which was shut up within itself, will now be thrown open. Difficulties, which have long, perhaps, existed, will be freely spoken of; and the poor soul that has mourned and struggled in secret, will find unspeakable relief in discovering that there is one human friend at least who can sympathize with it.

But, of all the classes and characters we meet with, the most difficult to deal with to any purpose is that which *accords with all we say*, but without any corresponding feeling. "Some men," remarks Cecil, "assent to every thing which we propose. They will even anticipate us. And yet, we see that they mean nothing. I have often felt, when with such persons, I would they could be brought to contradict or oppose! That would lead to some discussion. God might, peradventure, dash the strong heart in pieces. But this heart is like water; the impression dies as fast as it is made."

Experience will alone suggest to us how best to deal with such. And, after all, we can but speak according to our judgment in each instance, asking God to bless our words, however feebly spoken.

When a case presents itself requiring special treatment, it is important to *follow it up*. It is not one prescription that cures the patient; he needs, perhaps, a periodical repetition of the remedy, or at any rate, some modification of it. There must be careful and continued watching, if we would hope for a successful issue. And well is it if we do not depend solely on our own skill, but go often to the heavenly Physician, and ask Him to counsel us how to act.

But there is yet another class to be met with in every parish, and well-nigh at all times—the *Sick and Infirm*. And these have a prior claim to all others upon their Pastor. Debarred from the public ordinances of the Church, they more than any need to be privately visited, that they may thus partake of the spiritual food which they require. As they can not go to the means of grace, these must be brought to them. As they can not seek water at the ordinary wells of

salvation, the cup of blessing must be carried to them, and lifted up, as it were, to their lips.

Sickness is a most important season for religious impressions. It places a man in a position, in which we have an antecedent advantage in influencing him. Illness and death are oftentimes the only doors through which we can enter a house. This, too, is often the time when the Holy Spirit seems to strive more than commonly with men. "It is more important, more significant, far, than any stage of life and health. God is then in a remarkable manner pleading with the soul; and through the silent and solitary hours of illness, as through the mazes of a wilderness, the Good Shepherd is going after the lost sheep till he finds it."* It is true, that where we expect the richest harvest, our labors may often fail: and even in hopeful cases four out of five may eventually disappoint us. But does not the fifth case amply repay us for all the toil and anxiety we have expended? If *one* only is led to feel, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," is it not enough to cheer our

* Rev. E. Munro.

hearts, and prove to us that our "labor is not in vain in the Lord"?

Here, too, as in the other cases which I have mentioned, *gentleness and consideration* are greatly needed. The patient is often too weak to bear any thing like rough treatment; and his mind may be so shattered as to be incapable of exertion. Bodily pains will frequently draw off the attention, and absolutely incapacitate the person from deriving enjoyment from our ministrations. This should ever be borne in mind, lest we mistake his weakness for apathy, or set it down as spiritual indifference. We should not say too much; but what we do say should be to the point. Too long a visit often leaves a weariness behind it, and indisposes the person for a repetition of it. The reading of a short but suitable portion of Scripture, with a few words of affectionate, earnest application to the heart and conscience, followed up by a simple and fervent prayer—this is usually the course most likely to be acceptable, and at the same time the most useful.

Our Church wisely leaves it to the discretion of her Ministers to use what *Prayers* in the sick room they deem best. She provides us, it is true, with a Service for the express

purpose, should we need it. But, in her Sixty-seventh Canon, she gives us the option of using this service or not, "as the Preacher shall think most needful and convenient." Few, however, will feel that this, or indeed any form, is suited to the ever-varying cases which must necessarily come before us. Many manuals have been provided as aids to the Clergyman: but none can be found to meet every emergency; and in most cases he should rather trust to the free outpouring of his own heart in approaching God. This facility will soon be obtained. And some will be greatly helped by incorporating portions of the liturgy with their own petitions. This plan will be found to vary and enrich our language. The Confessions in the Daily and Communion Services are, amongst other prayers, admirably suited for this purpose.

Sometimes it is most desirable to see a sick person *alone*. There may be matters which have passed through his mind, which he would like his Minister alone to be acquainted with. At other times it may be desirable that some members of his family should be present, that they may gain advantage themselves from our visit, and that they may follow up with the sick person the conversation which we have

begun. In this latter case, there are three things (it has been observed) which we should have specially in view—the influence our words may have upon the person if dying—the influence they may have on him if he recover—the influence they may have on those about him who are in health.

In visiting the Sick, this question will often occur to one of a conscientious mind: “Should I visit this or that *infectious case*?” Most certainly this is our duty; and we are deserting our post, if we shrink back on such occasions. But it may be asked, whether this duty is imperative in the case of a married Clergyman? I answer again, Most certainly it is. What should we think of a Physician, who pleaded marriage as his exemption? It is clearly a part of our pastoral work; and God forbid that we should evade it! What! have we not put our hand to the plough? and shall we look back? Have we not ranged ourselves in the ministerial band? and shall we prove faint-hearted when a little danger shows itself? Rather let us go forward fearlessly, committing ourselves to the care of Him who will assuredly protect His servants, so long as He has work for them to do. It has been remarked that “no unfit emblem for the minis

try is to be found on the seal of one of our Religious Societies—the *Ox standing between the altar and the plough*—‘in utrumque paratus’—ready for any thing; service or sacrifice; the yoke or the knife.” We should be ready to say with St. Paul, “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you;” “None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.” For he who counts his life dear unto himself, has not yet learnt that a Pastor should have such a supreme love for souls, that he regards all else but loss for their sake.

There is some difficulty in deciding as to the cases in which to administer *the Holy Communion* to the sick and dying. If any one has been in the habit of receiving it when in health, there can be no doubt as to the propriety of administering it in the hour when he so much needs its comforting and refreshing support. There can be no question but that a true Christian will find unspeakable comfort and strength in this ordinance. It will confirm his faith, cheer his heart, and bring him near to his Saviour, whom he looks upon, at such a moment especially, as “all his salvation, and

all his desire." But where persons have never communicated in the days of their strength, and as yet show only equivocal signs of a real change of heart and purpose, we should be very slow either to propose, or accede to the request, that it be administered. Many wish it simply as *a viaticum*, from a kind of indefinite notion that there is something in it to do them good, whilst they lack that faith and devotedness of heart, which can alone make it a blessing to their souls. Indeed, the tendency of many is to regard it as a passport to heaven—a mysterious something, which they think may work for good to their soul's salvation, almost irrespective of any decided act of faith on their part. We must beware lest we encourage this tendency, and thereby foster a superstitious feeling, rather than an intelligent view of the Saviour's ordinance, and an affectionate regard for His dying command. We may be sorry to refuse it; but, where the case is clear, we must do so, lest we trifle with our Lord's ordinance and put a stumbling-block in the way of others.

And now let me close this subject with a few additional hints which suggest themselves to me.

1. Never let your visits be *intrusive*. There is a courtesy and a delicacy which *all* can appreciate. You have no right to cross any threshold with a covered head, or to forget that you are a visitor.

It is very desirable to choose your hours—to avoid, for instance, calling upon a person during meal-times. The Poor are apt to imagine that a Clergyman is actuated by feelings of curiosity, and that he either desires to spy out the nakedness of the land, or that he will go away with an erroneous impression as to their means. Many, who perceive how improvident their people are, feel anxious to put them into a better way of making their household arrangements—to point out to them in what particulars they may avoid waste, and make the most of their scanty pittance. But this seldom answers, and very often gives offense. At all events, it hardly comes within the scope of ministerial duty, and is very often taken in the light of officiousness, rather than of kindness.

2. Exercise prudence in *giving alms*. Many suppose, as I have already observed, that a clergyman's influence for good is in proportion to his *means of giving*, and that silver and gold

pave the way to the heart. There is no greater fallacy than this. It is true there is a sort of acceptance which money insures to a minister; but is it worth having? Is it the sort of acceptance that one should desire? His people soon get into the habit of looking to his purse rather than to his teaching. And whilst they are ready to welcome his gifts, they feel no additional relish for his ministrations. They receive him in the inferior character of a mere almoner, and not as a Minister of God.

As a general rule, I would not advise the giving of alms in connection with the imparting of spiritual advice. Separate the two as much as possible. This can easily be done by a second call, or by making others the bearers of our charity. And beware of purchasing popularity and attachment by creating so unworthy a feeling as that induced by the reception of a gift.

3. Be on your guard against *any thing that might have the semblance of impropriety*. A Minister is of necessity exposed to great risks. An unguarded expression may be misunderstood, or a false meaning may be willfully given to it. An act of simple kindness may

be tortured into an act of freedom. We have need of much caution, especially in visiting young females. In such cases it is best (more particularly for an unmarried man) to secure, if possible, the presence of a third person; for although the conscience of both the Sick person and also of the Clergyman may be void of offense, it is well to prevent even "the appearance of evil." Oh! how sad it is, when even a groundless surmise, a false report, is whispered against a clergyman! What a hindrance springs up to his usefulness! What a scandal arises in the Church! For the honor of Christ, whose servant you are—for the fair fame of the Church, which is dear to you—and for the preservation of your own peace of mind—be very cautious that nothing be done which may give the enemy an advantage and lay you open to the world's censure. Many, who once bade fair to be useful Ministers, have, through unwatchfulness, lost ground which it has taken years to recover. A man of God must put himself, as far as may be, *beyond the reach* of reproach and slander.

4. In chronic cases, where our visits are likely to be continuous, it may be desirable

to *act upon a fixed plan*. The person should be visited once a week, or oftener, according to his bodily state, or his spiritual necessities. And such successive visits will be rendered much more profitable, when there is some systematic and prearranged course of teaching adopted, such as has been already hinted. This will, with God's blessing, be likely to produce the greatest amount of real solid benefit, and will prevent also that repetition and sameness which are so apt to characterize our visits when they become periodical.

If the person has but little scriptural knowledge, it might be well to begin with the subject of the Fall; and then to pass on to the means provided for man's Recovery; the necessity of a change of heart and life; the efficacy and privilege of Prayer; the importance of Holiness, etc. In such a course a large amount of solid information might be imparted; and at all events the sick person would *know* more, and by God's blessing might be led to *feel* more, than before.

5. Realize *the value of every moment*, you spend with a sick person, if death be evidently near. There is no time perhaps to lose; and the opportunity is a golden one: it may

soon pass by. Oh! speak to him solemnly, affectionately, earnestly. Speak to him as on the verge of eternity. Speak to him hopefully and believingly; God may bless your words, and make them to be the cure of his soul. "We know," says one, "that God can give to one moment the value of a life, as in the case of the Penitent Thief on the cross. And although we have every reason to think that such cases are very rare, and that in general we must not rely very much on conversions which appear to have been effected on a death-bed; yet the sole possibility, joined to the great danger, makes it a sacred duty for us to labor for the conversion of the sick with all the resources which are at the command of our heart and spirit. '*Spera, quia unus; time, quia solus.*' You know not what may be passing in that interior world, into which your eye can not penetrate, nor by what mystery eternity may be suspended on a moment, and salvation on a sigh. You know not the value, the real value, of a single convulsive movement of the soul toward God, even at the last limit of earthly existence. Therefore leave nothing untried. Pray aloud *with* the dying man; pray secretly with your-

self *for* him. Cease not to direct his soul to the Saviour." *

6. Do not abandon *the Sick Person in his recovery; or his Relatives* in the case of his death. Both have a claim upon you. In both, it may be the iron is a little softened, and you have made a favorable impression. At all events both have been brought within your influence. Lose not the opportunity; but turn it to the best account. It is a great matter to have got the ear of any, and to have won their confidence. Now then is the favorable moment for leading them on to a more decided surrender of themselves to the Lord's service.

7. When there appears to be no hope of recovery, it is not always desirable to *announce a person's danger to him*. Sometimes it may be our duty; especially when we see that false hopes of restoration to health are cherished, or when we are forced to resort to alarm as the last and only method of inducing the sinner to consider his fearful condition. But otherwise it is better to let grace have its natural course apart from fear. For we may much more

* Vinet.

confidently rely on the reality and durability of the work that is accomplished in calmness than of that which is performed during the disturbed state of feeling which is caused by the unexpected approach of death. The repentance, self-reproach, faith, love, which spring up in the heart, when prolonged life is expected, are far more to be depended upon, than when they appear under the stimulating apprehension of the nearness of death. And remember, that the mere remorse which is produced by the consciousness that life is fast ebbing is not repentance; that terror is not concern; that the fear of death is not the fear of God.

It is wonderful to observe how little alarm is often felt even by ungodly persons when dying. As eternity approaches, and the soul stands at the very threshold of another world, one would suppose that then at least there would be a waking up to the realities of that world. But no—the soul often sleeps on to the very last, wrapped in the same cloak of unconcern which has hitherto inclosed it. We find much more of this apathy among persons of small culture, and who have lived a life of toil, than among learned and thinking men.

8. Endeavor to *feel a pleasure* in visiting the Sick and Afflicted. How difficult to take as deep an interest in some poor, squalid, un-gainly object, as in a person whose appearance and manner are naturally pleasing and attractive, though on the one angels may be looking down with joy, but on the other with grief. Again, to sally forth on a round of visits is sometimes sorely against the grain. We had rather perhaps be preaching, or sitting by our fireside, reading. Look upon this as a temptation, and watch against it; for the feeling will grow, if not met by a determined effort. Say to yourself: "I am going about my Master's business. I may be a channel of blessing to some souls. God may have a message to them through me." And even if you should feel less equal to the task than usual, still you may do something. You may be a *Barnabas*, when you can not be a *Boanerges*. Oh! the blessedness of being useful — spiritually useful — of soothing sorrow, drying up tears, leading wanderers into the fold of God! In this we share the joy of the Angels in heaven.

CHAPTER X.

PAROCHIAL WORK.

(CONTINUED.)

SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

THE Sunday-School has an importance of its own; and, where it is well conducted, God's special blessing may be looked for as accompanying it. Its importance, however, is somewhat lessened where there is a well-ordered day-school in the parish. It may then be regarded as a mere adjunct, forming a part only, though an essential part, of the weekly instruction.

In this case, are we wise in requiring so long an attendance from our children? In some parishes the Sunday-school meets an hour, or an hour and a half, before morning service. These together occupy nearly three hours; and this is enough to exhaust the attention, and thoroughly to weary the minds of any children. And thus a habit of inattention and listlessness is engendered, which

remains for years and years to come. Then, another hour is usually demanded in the afternoon; so that the Lord's day becomes indeed a day, if not of bodily, at least of mental, toil, when it ought rather to be one of rest and happiness.

The Sunday-school is not only useful to those who are taught in it, but it may be made a most beneficial means of Christian employment to many an earnest-hearted member of our flocks. It is well to set our people some legitimate work—to make them feel that they have some post to fill in the Church—some part to take in the good work which is going on. And what employment so legitimate as that of teaching in the Sunday-school?

To keep the Teachers together, and to sustain their interest in the work, it is desirable that the Clergyman should meet them once a month. This meeting should be for mutual conference and mutual comfort. The monthly lessons should be talked over, and the blessing of God should be asked both on those who teach, and on those who are taught.

Should the Clergyman take his share of labor in the Sunday-school? If he has a fellow-worker, and if the demands of the parish do not overtax their joint strength, I

conceive that it is his duty to be present in the school. His time there may be employed either in general superintendence, or by now and then instructing any particular class in the presence of its teacher, or, if he deems it advisable, taking under his especial charge one of the senior classes. And by so doing, he will cheer and encourage his under-laborers. But if he stands alone, and the whole weight of the Church ministrations falls upon him, I much question whether he should not reserve the edge and freshness of his strength for the more public offices of the sanctuary. We need the hour before public worship for gathering up our force, and for calm and quiet preparation for our sacred work. In this case, the clergyman would do well, I think, merely to open the school, and then retire.

The expediency of reviving the ancient custom of *Public Catechising* will depend on the wants and condition of a Parish. To some congregations its introduction would be welcome and profitable; whilst others would be likely to regard it as a return to former days of comparative ignorance. It should only be revived then after due consideration, and where there seems a fair prospect of its being acceptable. To catechise effectively, and

so as to create and sustain the interest of all present, requires much skill. It is an art of itself. And though I believe that most would acquire a facility by careful preparation and practice, and that it would tell beneficially on their preaching by rendering it more simple and lively, still it should be conducted *well*, or not at all.

A Sunday evening BIBLE CLASS, in parishes where there is no evening service, is often found to work extremely well. In establishing it, the Clergyman might publicly invite any young men to come together who feel so disposed; and he might speak privately to a few. Thus there would be no difficulty in obtaining a tolerably numerous class. The rough and careless ones would probably drop off; and the residue might, by God's blessing, form in time a valuable nucleus of steady, serious lads, who would strengthen one another in the good way, and set a beneficial example to others.

At such a meeting it would be desirable to spend part of the time in considering some portion of Scripture, and a part in reading some interesting book of a religious character. But care must be taken to stop

the moment the attention begins to flag. Those who attend should be impressed, too, with the idea that they do not meet as a class of school-boys, but as those who feel a desire to pass an hour on the Sabbath evening profitably. Such a class would amply repay any one for this additional tax upon his Sunday expenditure of strength.

With regard to the *Young Women* of our flock — they seem more naturally to come under the superintendence of a clergyman's wife, or other female helper.

And now it may be asked, How is it that so little substantial good accrues from the increased pains which, for some years past, have been taken with our schools? How is it that we have all reason to complain that the good effects are not commensurate with the means so energetically employed?

Partly, I think, because the good work commenced *at school* is not followed up and strengthened and consolidated *at home*. For how are we to expect school education alone to form a moral or religious character, when the softening and wholesome influences of parental nurture do not go hand in hand with it? And alas! this is want-

ing in too many cases. It should also be borne in mind, that our schools are intended to *assist* parents, not to *supersede* their exertions.

Besides, the time is so extremely limited which a child ordinarily spends at school, that he can at most receive only the bare elements, by which he may educate himself in after life. The school can merely act as a sort of mould, into which his mind and character *for a while* are cast, preparatory to his being thrown out into the wide world.

But is there not yet another cause, and that a very grave one, why our schools fail in producing the happy effects which we look for? Have not our efforts been made rather with a view to charging the memory with a certain amount of information, than to educating the minds of our children? Our object has been too much the cramming in of knowledge, to the neglect of what is of far greater importance — mental and moral training. We have tried to make our scholars grasp a great many truths, without being sufficiently anxious that those truths should be assimilated by the mind, and affect the daily practice.

There is no greater mistake than to sup-

pose that education consists in merely furnishing the brain and imparting knowledge. There must be the culture of the mind and the training of the whole character, as well as the bare supplying the intellect and memory with facts and opinions. The common cry of the present day is, "Give the children of the poor ample information, and they will become good and intelligent members of society"—just as if the imparting of knowledge, even moral and religious knowledge, were one and the same thing with moral and religious *training*; and as if the bare *acquaintance* with what is right were synonymous with the *doing* of it. I am quite aware that the truth when deposited in the mind may germinate, and, by God's blessing, bear fruit. Still, experience shows us, that in many cases, the scattering of good seed alone is insufficient. Mere *teaching* will rarely subdue evil habits and propensities, or form right ones: this must be done by *training*. We can not, for instance, by the simple process of lecturing, talk a child into good manners, or change his bad habits by word of mouth; it is only by gradual and successive discipline, and by encouraging the child to reduce certain rules to actual prac-

tice, that this can be really effected. There may be in children a thorough knowledge of the facts and doctrines of Scripture; and yet no habit may have been formed in them of reducing these lessons to practice. They may know Scripture, and yet may even hate its principles and precepts. Is it any wonder, then, that in our parishes where Scripture is taught to the young, sin and crime still prevail, and the tone and conduct of the masses are but little improved?

How is it with the acquirement of proficiency in any art or science? A person may have studied deeply on the subject of chemistry, but if he has not gone into the laboratory, and there put his knowledge into practice by combination and analysis, he will prove to be but a very inefficient chemist.

A person, again, who is destined for Public Speaking may have read much, and been taught much—he may be critically conversant with all the rules of elocution—but he will make only a poor figure, unless he has applied himself practically to the art—unless, in fact, he has been *trained* to public speaking.

This is just the point in which our present school system seems to me to fall short—it

imparts knowledge abundantly ; but it does not show how that knowledge may be brought to bear on daily life ; and so it fails in the formation of the moral and religious character of our children ; it does not *educate* them in the truest and highest sense.

And this applies, I fear, to the directly religious, as well as to the general, instruction given in our schools. We take high ground. We teach Scripture, storing the mind with text upon text. And we are right in doing this. But let us not imagine that the work is then accomplished ; for we have, perhaps, omitted the more important part — the training process ; we have not been sufficiently careful to show our scholars how to carry out practically in their daily life the truths which they have learnt.

And yet we wonder that our present educational system is not producing more satisfactory results ! Will it ever do so, unless we set ourselves to educate the mind, to form the habits, and to cultivate the affections, and to mould the character, as well as to inform the understanding and fill it with bare truths ?

There is a Scripture precept which says, "Train up a child in the way he should go ;"

and with that precept there is connected a promise of success—"when he is old he will not depart from it." How many look for the promise, without fulfilling the precept. It is often considered sufficient, both at school and at home, merely to *teach* children, instead of *training* them—to tell them what is right without helping them to do it, and encouraging them by example. Now, what we want is to bring religion to bear upon their lives out of school and in the world. And this is done not so much by imparting certain religious truths, or even by leading them to certain religious acts, as by habituating them to ordinary acts on a religious principle, and from a religious motive. If we wish to make a plant grow in a particular manner, we do not merely put it into the ground, and start it in the right direction; but we use all our skill to turn and twist it, so that it may grow as we desire. In short, we *train* the plant; and so must we act with our children, if we hope to see our own exertions successful.

Let us then, in whom the management of our Schools is mainly vested, turn our attention more than we have as yet done to this *training* of the young. And surely we shall soon find that our labors begin to tell, and

that our schools are producing more sensible effects upon the rising population. Let us be more anxious to diffuse a kindly, cheerful, Christian tone among our children, than to engraft an excessive amount of learning upon them. Let us endeavor that there be a healthy moral influence at work; for on this most of all will the education of the after-man and woman really depend.

I will give an instance or two of what I mean. Make an earnest effort at once to raise the general tone of your school. You can do this by giving a practical turn to the ordinary lessons and by carefully nurturing all the amiable and lovely qualities of which the human character is susceptible—such as truthfulness, honesty, forbearance, generosity, kindness to animals, gentleness, courtesy, pity for the weak and distressed, and doing to others as we would they should do unto us—to say nothing of those higher graces which the Gospel commends to us. Now, if we can but implant these, we shall indeed have cultivated to some purpose the soil committed to our care!

Or, if we can but succeed in establishing among our scholars *any one* of these—for example, the single habit of *Truthfulness*—

immense good will result from it. "It will be like a column in the midst of the school. The whole character of the school will be supported by it, and other Christian graces will cling to it. Moral qualities have a companionship; they derive mutual support from one another. Not many vices will be found associated in the same character with Truthfulness; nor many virtues with Falsehood."*

Or again, to take a particular instance—we find one of our children to be rough and passionate, and we wish to see him mild, gentle, and self-controlled. It is not enough to teach him the Scripture precepts, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath;" "Render to no man evil for evil;" "Be courteous." He may repeat these correctly, and even understand them; but passion and roughness will still prevail in his general conduct, unless he is taught to use his knowledge, and unless such habits as those of forbearance and courtesy can be formed in him *by constant exercise*.

Of course it must not for a moment be supposed that the most careful and wise training can change the heart. For this a greater power than ours is needed: the Holy Spirit

* Rev. H. Moseley.

can alone effect it. But to train is *our part* of the work, and it is one in the use of which we may hope for God's blessing.

I am persuaded that the present system is defective *somewhere*. Else why is it that among our scholars there are so many who have a certain amount of religious knowledge—who are acquainted with all the details of religious truth—have a tolerably clear insight into the doctrines of the Gospel—are at times worked up to a certain measure of religious feeling—and yet sadly disappoint us when we look for the only satisfactory result, namely, religious *practice*? Like rank and succulent shoots, they make a show of much growth; but when we come to look for fruit, we find none.

After all, in our School labors, considering what human nature is, we must be prepared for a *certain* amount of failure, and bear it cheerfully. "It may very likely turn out that boy after boy, whom you thought you had formed, may disappoint you, may forget you, your lessons, and your teaching, when he leaves the school-room for the world, and remain as an eyesore in your parish, and an ever-annoying memorial of labor thrown away. Be it so. In all such cases as these, it is only a

residuum of good that the most sanguine should look for; and this they may not unreasonably expect. And that residuum is a great thing. We may easily have done good, though we do not *see* it. And if the work in one part of the field shows no apparent fruits, in another it does.”*

* *Munro's Parochial Work.*

CHAPTER XI.

PAROCHIAL WORK.

(CONTINUED.)

SUNDAY SERVICES—WEEKLY SERVICES—COTTAGE LECTURES—MISSIONARY MEETINGS—CLUBS—DISTRICT VISITING SOCIETIES.

“LET every thing be done decently and in order,” says the Apostle. And in nothing is this order and decorum more desirable than in *the Public Worship of God*. Every thing connected with God’s house should be conducted with the utmost care and propriety. The state of our churches is somewhat of an index of the condition of the worshippers. Thirty or forty years ago our Buildings were for the most part neglected and uncared for; and our services were cold and unattractive. Happily this state of things no longer prevails. Let us see that nothing be wanting on our part, so that Public Worship may be all that it ought to be.

There should be a marked precision ob-

served in always commencing the service at the appointed hour. The *Prayers* should be offered up in a devout and intelligent manner. The person who officiates should not merely *read*, but *pray*. Monotony should be avoided. There should be some slight variation of voice according to the nature of each prayer. One would not expect a malefactor pleading for his life, and one returning thanks for a pardon received, to use the same tone. And so there should surely be some difference in the expression of our voice, when we are confessing our sins, or entreating God's forgiveness, or offering up our thanks for past mercies. Where Prayer is merely a formal matter with us, it may well be monotonous; but where it is the language of our *hearts*, it will not and can not be so. Whilst, however, we avoid a monotonous style in reading the Prayers, we should be careful to eschew a studied manner, and that emphatic tone which partakes of the nature of spouting. This extreme is worse than the other. That manner, on which a natural earnestness is stamped, is the most impressive and decorous.

In *the Reading of the Lessons* and other portions of Holy Scripture, the same carefulness should be observed. Here too, as in the

Prayers, a dull monotony on the one hand, as well as a studied and artificial manner on the other, should be equally avoided. "No rule (observes Professor Blunt) for reading God's Word in the congregation can help the Minister so effectually, as the rule of thoroughly *understanding* what he reads; while the mere regulation of his voice will be an actual commentary, conveying to his hearers the true meaning where it might otherwise escape them; and often giving a novelty to lessons which they had listened to a hundred times before."

The *Singing* too should be as good as we can render it—such simple, earnest singing, as the congregation may be able to take part in, and which is devoid of any thing like pretension or display. Few things contribute more to the warmth and attractiveness of our Public Worship than good Singing. It has a great charm for the Poor, and still more for the Young. It gives life to a congregation, and is a healthy antidote to drowsiness.

I might add that *Chanting* the Canticles, etc., if moderately introduced, is no small relief both to Minister and People; and it forms a delightful variation in the service.

And, lastly, the *Sermon* should be delivered

in a manner becoming the importance of the message which we proclaim. But this subject has already been treated in detail in a previous chapter. ✕

In short, let nothing be neglected or uncared for in our Public Service; but let it, as a whole, be such as will commend itself to every intelligent and earnest worshipper. And although we would not aim at making it attractive simply as a matter of expediency; yet we would desire to make it so in the highest sense, as feeling that God is well pleased with the cheerful and willing homage of His people.

Each part of the Service too should be in keeping with the rest. It is very offensive to see the devotional portion so conducted, as though the Minister would seem to say: "We mean nothing by this service; have a little patience and you shall hear *me*." And scarcely less objectionable is the other extreme, into which some fall, of depreciating the great ordinance of Preaching.

It is to be hoped that the days of Single Services on the Sunday, or of Prayers without a Sermon, are gone by—the *only* exceptional case being where the vicinity of two churches is such, that the congregations of both can without difficulty attend at either place.

But, besides the decent, orderly, and effective celebration of public worship *on the Lord's day*, should not some instruction be provided for the congregation *during the week*?

I am disposed to recommend either a full *Church Service*, with a sermon or exposition, on some one evening in the middle of the week; or, if this should seem undesirable, owing to the peculiar state of the congregation or the position of the church, a weekly *Lecture at the School*, with a selection of prayers from the ordinary service.

Some have objected, that the latter is likely to lead to a depreciation of the house of God. But, so far from it, I am persuaded that it may be made to act as an incentive to a more frequent attendance there; and that it tends rather to fill our churches than to empty them.

Again, it is feared by some, lest the assembling of a congregation after dark should expose the young to temptation. After having tried the plan for above twenty years, I can unhesitatingly state that I am not aware of a single case of immorality having occurred which could be traced to attendance at an evening service.

But, after all, it may be said, Why not open the House of God? I admit there are several

reasons which render it desirable that the weekly services should be held in the church. But, owing to the difficulty, especially in the country, of lighting and warming a large building—the chilling effect produced on the mind by seeing a spacious church scantily filled, and the necessary * length of the service—it may in some cases be found better to assemble our people in the school-room. Here they may be gathered for a short hour; and an opportunity will be given to the minister to speak to them more familiarly, and with less constraint, than in church. I feel sure that a weekly lecture, well conducted, whether it be held in the church or in the school, is productive of a vast blessing in a parish. It is a rallying-point for the well-disposed and anxious among our people; and those who feel that they need spiritual food and refreshment between Sunday and Sunday, will find what their souls desire.

Care should, however, be taken to discontinue such services at those seasons of the year when the attendance of the people can not reasonably be expected. And it is far better that they

* It would, indeed, be no small boon to our Church if a short Occasional Service, suitable for week-day use, were put forth by authority.

should be dropped before the gradual thinning of the congregation has become visible. And they will afterward be resumed with all the greater zest.

It will at once be seen that the question of *Daily Prayers*, and the observance of the minor *Festivals*, is not affected by the suggestions here made; since the want here mainly intended to be met is the instruction of the people.

Besides this Weekly Service or Lecture, it has been found well to have smaller meetings in different parts of the parish, which are usually called *Cottage Lectures*. This is little more than Pastoral Visitation under another form. A cottage in a suitable locality being selected for the purpose, the neighbors are invited to assemble on a fixed day and hour; a few prayers are offered up, and a plain, simple explanation is given of some portion of Scripture. This enables a minister to economize his time, by gathering a portion of his flock in little groups; it also gives publicity to his presence in a particular part of the parish at a stated time; and, further, it affords him an admirable opportunity of learning to speak plainly and with fluency, and incidentally becomes a good preparation for extempore preaching.

Whether these Cottage Lectures should be *fixed* or *migratory*, must depend upon local circumstances. In the former case, each Lecture should be held at an invariable time and place. In the latter, the people might be assembled at any suitable house by a notice issued by the Clergyman. In either case, it is expedient, if possible, to select the cottage of a person who would be likely to take an interest in inviting the neighbors.

A few years back, there was a strong prejudice in the minds of many against this method of giving instruction to our people, on the score that it was not in exact keeping with the decorous stateliness of our Church. Happily, this feeling is melting away before the increased earnestness of our clergy. "It has been urged," (says the late Archbishop of Canterbury in one of his charges,) "in regard to the domestic mode of teaching or lecturing, that it lessens the dignity of the Church, and approximates us to the habits of Dissenters. If this be so, it only proves that they have been quicker than ourselves to discover what is needed by the wants of the people, and what is suited to their habits; and we are surely more prudent in wielding their weapons, than in leaving them in their hands,

to be employed against ourselves. The clergy who have tried such plans all unite in the same remark. They find their instruction doubly useful. Not less effectual in rousing those *unwilling* to attend church, than in comforting those who are *unable*." X

Missionary Meetings are indispensable in a well-worked parish. An interest in the heathen reäets upon the heart that feels it. Rather, I would say, that the soul which has been aroused to a personal feeling for its own salvation, must needs be interested in the welfare of others. Happy is it if we can by any means move men from their selfishness. Happy, if we can get them to feel a little for their brethren. And such a feeling is specially promoted by missionary exertions.

Where the people of a parish have been unused to missionary collections, injury will be done to the cause by pressing them too hard at first. Rather begin by first trying to create a missionary spirit, and let men's minds be informed on the subject; then lay the matter pointedly before them, and invite them to take part in a cause at once so reasonable and so blessed. If the subject be started precipitately at first, it will be likely to flag; and

especially if too pressing an appeal is made to the pocket, before the heart is really interested. The first meeting in a parish might be conducted by one or two speakers only, and those of the neighborhood; and then in subsequent years it might be well to obtain the assistance of some stranger who may have given his special attention to missionary subjects.

Be careful not to overdo your parishioners with meetings. A variety of objects will perplex them. It is far better that their interest should be concentrated on a few, and that their relish for these should be kept up. They will be sure to tire, if we unreasonably appeal to their liberality and overtax their sympathy.

On the same grounds a Missionary Meeting should be as concise and interesting as possible. In many cases they are apt to be desultory and tedious, from want of due prearrangement and preparation. A meeting not exceeding two hours would convey as much information as most can retain—would remove much of the prejudice that is usually felt—would enable many to attend who have hitherto staid away—and would also interfere less with domestic duties.

If you can manage it, you will effectually forward the work by sending missionary collectors periodically* round your parish, taking special care that none are unduly pressed, whilst an opportunity is afforded to all to take a part in the good work, if they will. An occasional reference to the subject from the pulpit will help it on. And the records of Missions will furnish abundant variety of illustration, if judiciously employed, in our ordinary preaching.

A Lending Library is a somewhat attractive item, without which our parochial arrangements seem hardly complete. But an experience of a few years has led me to the conclusion that it rarely answers the expectation of the promoter. The books in their new livery, and with their unsoiled pages, are at first popular enough among the cottagers. But soon the interest flags, and the demand becomes dull. I am persuaded that more

* Some have suggested a return to the *Weekly Offertory*, as a means of gathering the contributions of those who are willing to further the advancement of the Church of Christ, both at home and abroad. To attempt this hastily would be most unwise. We should first satisfy ourselves that there be a decided willingness on the part of our congregations to see the practice revived.

good is done by having a well-supplied shelf in one's own library, from which books are lent out when asked for. These books are the more valued as coming from the Minister's own private store, just as a little broth made expressly for a sick person, and coming from the parsonage, is far more acceptable than the soup, though equally savory, which is supplied by the public kitchen.

Societies of a purely temporal nature must not be overlooked. For although they do not directly form a part of ministerial work, they grow out of it, and come in aid of it.

In a large parish, or even in one of moderate dimensions, where the clergyman is single-handed, he will find that a little staff of *District Visitors* is almost as serviceable as a Curate. Each visitor, who periodically goes the round of his or her district, becomes fully acquainted with the character, circumstances, and wants of those who reside in it, and can convey to the minister any information which it is well for him to possess. Thus he is by deputy almost ubiquitous, and is able to go personally to those houses where his presence is most required.

At a monthly meeting, a report should be made of the visits that have been paid; and a few words of exhortation and encouragement, and a prayer for God's blessing, will keep the work in a state of healthy motion.

A Clergyman, if he be methodical, and has his varied machinery well at work, will effect more, and with less personal labor, than two or three would do by a desultory management of their parish.

CHAPTER XII.

P A R O C H I A L W O R K .

(CONTINUED.)

CONFIRMATION—THE LORD'S SUPPER—COMMUNICANTS' MEETING—CHURCHMANSHIP.

CONFIRMATION, as it periodically comes before us, forms a most important part of parochial work. Many have felt the season of Confirmation a little trying and wearisome. And yet who that has entered upon it with zeal, and energy, and prayer, has not found it productive of much blessed fruit? We have to deal oftentimes with very thick heads and very hard hearts, but sure I am that our pains are not bestowed in vain.

We often complain of the ignorance and apathy which is felt on the subject of Confirmation. But the fault is partly in ourselves. Were our people better informed on the subject of Baptism—did we urge upon them more frequently and intelligibly the importance of realizing their privilege as baptized members

of Christ's Church—did we address them as those who have already pledged themselves to be earnest followers of the Saviour—did we oftener remind Sponsors of their solemn duties—we should then find less indifference on the subject of Confirmation, and it would be regarded with more reverence, as a reasonable and important ordinance of the Church.

In the preparation of our Confirmation Candidates, one great difficulty arises from the very limited time usually allotted to that onerous work. It has always struck me that if our Bishops would give a longer notice of their intention to confirm, it would enable us to make our labors much more effectual. What is the state of things at present? Why, usually the great work of Preparation is crowded into the space of six or seven weeks. Thus many an earnest Pastor is disheartened; he feels that his task is a hopeless one; he has mountains of difficulty to cut through, and but little time to do it in.

But as it is generally pretty well known for a considerable time before, that the Bishop will hold a Confirmation, although the precise day is not announced, our labor will be lessened, and be rendered far more satisfactory and effective, by giving notice some months

beforehand of the approaching Confirmation. Suppose, for instance, we have reason to expect it in May or June. Early in the year we might give public notice in church, that all who desired to become candidates should give in their names by a certain day. Then two or more classes might be formed of boys, and as many more of girls. And these might be required to meet once in each week—the boys probably on Sunday, and the girls on some other day.

And I question whether it would not be very beneficial if we were *always* to have a standing class of Catechumens, in a state of preparation for Confirmation. This would give us a hold on our young people which we much want; and mutual confidence would grow up between us.

This would be *making much* of Confirmation, and would tend to rescue it from its low position as a Church ordinance. A system of real instruction might be carried out, in the place of mere cramming. We should have an opportunity also of carefully watching the character of each candidate. And thus it would be likely to become an intelligent act, and would be regarded with the solemnity that it deserves. The beneficial effect also of the

Sunday evening Bible-class would here be seen; since there would probably be some of its members who would also form part of the Confirmation class; and a real ministerial connection would be kept up between the young of the flock and their Shepherd.

Having then secured, instead of a few weeks, a sufficient time for solid preparation for the ordinance, I would recommend a regular course of instruction—taking pains to lay a good foundation of Scriptural knowledge—mingling with it occasional appeals to the consciences of the candidates—and leading them to feel that this is a great opportunity, when they are called upon to decide for themselves whether they will be followers of Christ or not. I would treat them with all the tender affection, and at the same time with the parental authority, of a Christian pastor.

The actual Day of Confirmation should be looked upon as a day of peculiar solemnity; and every effort should be made to invest the ordinance with the importance belonging to it. Before going to church, it might be well to gather the candidates for prayer—imploping God's blessing on the sacred rite.

In most foreign countries, both the Roman

Catholic and Protestant Churches make much of *the First Communion*. And I am persuaded that more might be made with advantage of our Confirmation season, and the first reception of the Lord's Supper to which it leads. It might be invested with a peculiar solemnity, which would not soon be forgotten, and which would have a beneficial influence on the after-life. We might well point out the great blessing which they are going to receive, and the high privilege to which they will be admitted. What more hopeful time for impressing their hearts, and urging upon them real decision in their future Christian course? What better moment for cautioning them against the evils which will beset their path, and the peculiar temptations which are likely to assail them? When, in short, can we speak to them one by one more closely and more pointedly than at this affecting season?

And now I am naturally led to speak on the general subject of *the Holy Communion*—the highest ordinance in the Christian Church, and one which brings such comfort and blessing to the devout recipient. I have already glanced at the subject, when speaking of the Visitation of the Sick.

Every Minister will desire to see the Saviour's dying command obeyed, and His Table crowded with guests. He will feel a joy as he meets the faithful of his flock gathered for this feast of love. His heart will go out toward them, and his prayers will be breathed forth, that all may be drawn closer to their common Lord.

A full attendance on Communion Sundays may well encourage us. But whilst we thank God for the number of our communicants, we must not take this as a sure gauge of the spiritual condition of our people. We may so press them to communicate as to induce many to attend, who can not be regarded as spiritual recipients of the holy ordinance. We may, in fact, be depreciating this Sacrament of our Lord, when we would be honoring it. And further, we should bear in mind that many come from mere habit, and from sadly defective motives.

I know it is thought by some that if we can but persuade men to attend this sacred Feast, the very fact of coming will to a certain extent engage them to a holy life. But surely we should not be right in turning the Lord's Supper to such an account. It must not be looked upon as *a stepping-stone to seri-*

ousness, so much as an ordinance for the strengthening and refreshing of those *whose hearts are already turned toward the Saviour*. It must not be regarded as an ordinance by which men are *to become* religious, but as an ordinance for those who, through God's mercy, *have become* religious. It is the children's bread—a feast for the Lord's people. Any other view than this tends to lower the Sacrament, and to rob it of its peculiar character.

Most heartily would I welcome all who feel within them a true desire to serve the Lord—even the weakest and humblest among His people. But I would guard the sanctity of my Master's table, by restraining those whose souls do not appear to be under the leadings of His grace.

Our rule then should be this—whilst we are careful not to urge one unprepared soul to approach the Lord's Table, we should speak of the blessing of frequent communion for the people of God. Happily this sacred and refreshing ordinance is administered at least once a month to most of our congregations; so that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus have abundant opportunities of spiritually feeding on the Saviour's body and blood.

I may, perhaps, be thought to have dwelt

somewhat cursorily on this subject, as well as that of Confirmation. But there are so many admirable books in which these important topics are treated in all their details, that I forbear to enlarge upon them in the present work.

In connection with the Lord's Supper, I would strongly recommend to my Brethren the adoption of *Communicants' Meetings*. By these I mean, not mere gatherings at which the Lord's Supper is the subject lectured upon; but I refer to Meetings of *Communicants only*, and from which *all other persons* are excluded.

It is generally admitted that we want something in our parishes to keep together the religious members of our flocks. Now, it is expected that our Communicants are more or less persons of this character: they usually form the Christian leaven in our congregations. It seems, then, very desirable to gather them together, to try and promote a brotherly feeling among them, and to lead them to look upon the joint participation of this holy Feast as a common bond which binds them to each other. An opportunity is also thus given to the Minister to speak to them, as those who have declared plainly that they are on the Lord's side. He may for the time lose sight

of the "mixed multitude" of his ordinary hearers, and address these as in an especial manner his Brethren in Christ, and as the Saviour's Friends.

These meetings should be made somewhat unlike ordinary religious meetings, and should not be allowed to degenerate into them. I would again press the importance of keeping up their strict character as Meetings of *Communicants* exclusively—no one, under any pretense, being admitted who belongs not to this Body. I am inclined to think that the introduction of extemporaneous prayer on such occasions might be advisable. And I would either confine myself to Prayer and the solemn Reading of God's Word without any comment; or I would give a short and earnest address *without the usual formality of a Text*. I have seen both plans tried with much success; and perhaps an alternation of the two is the most desirable. The object should be to warm the heart, and to stimulate the soul to the exercise of the higher Christian graces.

If, by this and other means, we could gather around us a little knot of faithful, earnest, consistent Communicants, what strength it would give to our ministry! We should have a body of really devout Churchmen,

who would diffuse light and life around them ; and we should have here a valuable staff, who might serve as helpers to their weaker brethren, and be ready for every good work.

It is a vexed question, how far it is wise for a Clergyman to make direct efforts to carry out *Church Principles* among his people. We must be discreet on this point ; for it is a somewhat delicate matter. To be constantly dwelling on the Church's authority, and the Church's superior excellence, is neither politic, nor is it in accordance with the teaching and tone of holy Scripture. It will weary and repel, rather than attract.

Besides, however much we may ourselves revere the Church in which we minister ; whilst we desire that those who are under us should prize the sacraments and institutions which Christ has ordained ; whilst we are bold in declaring that to neglect them is fearful, and to despise them is sinful ; still we must not forget the distinction "between what is saving and what is edifying—between what is life-giving and what is strengthening—between the fountain and the channels. We must maintain that there is no salvation for any child of man, but by direct and personal application to Christ

Himself; that every one who seeks pardon must individually flee to the cross; that every one who would enter heaven must extend his own hand to receive the Redeemer's righteousness. Lay this foundation deep: then all the rites of our Church will be blessed handmaids to the truth, and will lead the Believer by holy nurture and sound help to 'the inheritance of the saints in light.'**

Are we then to refrain altogether from recommending a faithful allegiance to our Church? Are we to consider it of little importance, whether our people belong to our communion as a matter of mere accident and convenience, or whether they are heartily and intelligently attached to it? Certainly not; it is of great importance to build them up in sound Church principles—to infuse a Church spirit among them—and to cultivate in them a feeling of loyalty toward her.

Perhaps there is no time when this attachment to our Church could be more naturally pressed than during the season of Confirmation, when the young are looking to us for affectionate counsel as regards their future course. Whilst we seize the favorable moment

* Charge by Archdeacon Law.

to urge them to become earnest and spiritual Christians, let us also labor to form them in the mould provided by the Church.

And here I will close my remarks on PAROCHIAL WORK. I am aware that I have left some topics altogether untouched, and on others I have been compelled to touch far more lightly than their importance seems to demand. But I have been content to call attention to some of the more salient features in the working of a parish.

I trust I have succeeded in showing that a minister of the Church is something more than a mere preacher, or a conductor of public services, or an administrator of the sacraments. The daily interests of the flock are *his* interests, and their well-being and happiness, both in this life and the next, to an immense extent, hinge upon *him*. He must be one with them; sympathizing with them in their sorrows and their joys; helping them through their daily difficulties; soothing them under their daily trials; and, whilst he fights with them in their spiritual battles, he must himself go before them, and lead them on to victory.

Most important is it that he should exercise tact and skill in the *general management* and

supervision of his whole work. He may succeed in certain details, and yet fail as an administrator of the whole. He may, for instance, be an able preacher, or a diligent visitor, and yet be an imperfect Pastor after all. The mind to plan, and the energy to keep in motion, the needful machinery, and the gift of order and regularity which shall make the whole work well, may be wanting. He must be something more than a mere theorist: he must be a practical, active, stirring man, as well as a man of God. And if he would do great things in his parish, his people must feel that they have one placed over them who is *able* to guide them. I believe that our people look for this. They feel that they ought to find in their Pastor one who has the ability, as well as the good-will, to give them real superintendence. The Soldier looks for it in his General; the Sailor in his Captain; the Laborer on the Farm looks for it in his Master. And so our people should be able to feel that they can repose confidence in their Minister, as one who is able to guide and lead them on their way to heaven. And oh! what a scope for usefulness lies before him! He may give a tone to the whole Parish, and exercise an influence which may be felt by generations to come.

Let not the young Minister, however, be discouraged. He may feel at first that there is much which is altogether new to him in his parochial work. The readiest among us do not possess *all* gifts. Many are acquired only by degrees, and after considerable experience. Let him do the very best he can; and God will bless his endeavors, and overrule his errors.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOCIETY—PARTY SPIRIT—RECREATIONS.

A YOUNG Clergyman is often in some difficulty to know how to act for the best as regards *Society*. He feels himself called to a sacred office; and he desires to fulfill it, not as pleasing men, but God who tries the heart. But there are so many conflicting opinions in reference to Society, that he is at some loss how best to steer his course.

To hold intercourse with his *clerical* brethren, or with any *seriously disposed* persons in his neighborhood, he will find to be both beneficial and in accordance with his taste. But how is he to act toward *the world at large*? To refuse their society altogether would be the easier course; but I am not sure that it is the best. I would rather recommend him to associate, if invited, with those around him; but under certain restrictions.

First, let him beware of acquiring a taste for general society, and let him avoid a too

frequent appearance in company. It has been said that any man's character is degraded when *he is to be had*. Much more so is this the case with a Christian minister.

Let him, in the next place, be very watchful over his own spirit; and if he feels that he is suffering loss—if, for instance, he finds his own heart growing cold and worldly—if his zest for heavenly things seems to be impaired—if he feels the monotony of home growing irksome to him—let him take these as indications that society is doing him harm, and let him avoid the danger which threatens him.

Another caution, which I would give to those who feel themselves called to mix with worldly persons, is this—Beware of imperceptibly lowering yourself to their level; but rather try to rise above them, and aim at raising their standard higher. Many go into the world, and are tempted to think that, if they conform themselves a little to its customs and prejudices, they will be likely to gain an influence for good. They give in a little to its ways, in the hope that they may thus purchase a certain amount of good-will, which they may turn to their Master's advantage. But, whilst

they are thus descending from their high ground, they may, in fact, be losing far more than they gain, and may be sacrificing the dignity of their office, without winning an adequate advantage in return.

Further, we should always, when going into mixed company, prepare ourselves for it by earnest prayer. It was said of Eliot, the distinguished missionary, by one of his friends, "I never was with him, but I got, or might have got, good from him." A minister of Christ should specially desire to be useful to those among whom he mingles, remembering that a seasonable word spoken in private conversation is often more regarded and attended to, than when uttered officially and in public. On such occasions, he should always remember that he is Christ's minister; and he should study more to be regarded as a consistent Clergyman, than as an accomplished man of the world.

"The character of a Minister," says Cecil, "is far beyond that of a mere *Gentleman*. It takes a higher walk. He will, indeed, study to be a real gentleman; he will be the farthest possible from a rude man: he will not disdain to learn, nor to practise, the decencies of society. But he will sustain a

still higher character. I fell into a mistake, when a young man, in thinking that I could talk with men of the world on their own ground, and thus win them over to mine. This pleased them; but I did not consider that I gave a consequence to their pursuits, which does not belong to them; whereas, I ought to have endeavored to raise them above these, that they might engage in higher." The truth is, we find men tied and bound to this world, and we must take care lest by our example we seem to legalize that thoughtlessness and triviality, which we ought to condemn. It has been said: "If we walk near the brink, others will fall into the precipice: if we take one step into the world, our hearers will take two."

There should be the habit of self-control, too, about a Clergyman, which may at once mark him as one who fills a sacred office. He should not be a mere talker, a boon-companion, or an eager politician; much less a lover of wine. And, though cheerful in his manner, he should avoid a trifling spirit. Any thing like levity should never be the characteristic of one in holy orders. Saint Bernard says: *Nugæ in aliis sunt nugæ; in sacerdotibus blasphemie*. His bearing, in short,

should be such, that others may respect him, and never forget whose name he bears, and and in whose work he is engaged.

I will here give an extract from Vinet's wise counsel to his divinity students, as to the part they were to take in society: "The first rule is to speak little; a second is to joke seldom; a third is to discuss moderately, and within reasonable limits; a fourth is not to use strong language and too vehement utterance. I would add, as another rule, Be careful to speak rather of things than of persons."

So various, however, are men's positions and temperaments, that it is difficult to lay down fixed rules in this matter. If any one should feel himself unfitted to be useful in mixed society, or should find himself in danger of being carried away by its current, it is his duty to shun it. But if, on the contrary, he feels that his intercourse with others in no wise unfits him for his Master's work—nay, that it is good for his own spirit, and is really a means of usefulness—then may he with advantage mix moderately in society. But it should be with caution and watchfulness, so that it may be evident from his Christian bearing that he ever desires,

whether alone or with others, to "be about his Father's business."

Our Lord's example is often brought forward to prove that He was no advocate for retirement from the world. And truly, if we can but carry our Lord's spirit into the world, we may go fearlessly; we may, in that case, as Cecil says, attend marriage feasts and Pharisees' houses.

And when we are thrown into society, well would it be if we tried more to imitate the conduct of Jesus; for in every house where He was admitted, His mouth was ever "speaking of wisdom, and His tongue talking of judgment." "It can scarcely be denied," observes one of our prelates, "that even among those who acknowledge the general duty of confessing Christ before men, there is often a very unchristian desertion of religious topics, altogether inconsistent with the profession of those who read and believe that 'whosoever shall be ashamed of Him, in this wicked and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels.'" There is often a "keeping silence from good words," but without any of that "pain and grief," of which David

complained, as the consequence of his forced reserve. How few can appeal to God, as he did, to bear testimony to their conscientious discharge of duty in this particular: "Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest."

Having spoken of Society, there is a kindred subject, about which I can not refrain from saying a few words — namely, *Party Spirit*. Alas! that it should be necessary to refer to this. But unhappily the Spirit of Party is at this time too prominent a feature in our religious condition to be passed over. It is the bane of any Church, for it tears and rends it wherever it exists; and it has torn and rent ours, and it does so to a considerable extent at the present moment. "If," says a modern writer, "the Apostle Paul were living in our own age and country, there is surely too much reason to fear that he would speak to *us* in terms of censure and reproof, equally severe with those which he addressed to the Corinthians. How little of unity and brotherly love seems to survive among us! Almost on every side we hear the harsh sounds of fierce disputings on religious questions. The dearest ties

are severed ; and coldness, estrangement, suspicion, and bitterness, prevail, where nothing ought to exist but kindness, gentleness, and love. Truly might the Apostle say of *us* : "I hear there are divisions among you."*

It is sad and mournful to think that so many Christians, so many Christian ministers too, whose interchanges ought to be all love, should be looking coldly and censoriously on one another. If we lived closer to Christ, each one of us, we should be drawn closer together. Why should we not merge the few points on which we differ in them any on which we agree, instead of wasting our strength on petty and puny dissensions ?

I would, on no account, advocate that latitudinarianism, which is indifferent to the truth of God. Neither would I recommend that state of mind, which is ever trying to hold the balance even between the two opposing parties — which is always ready to make a compromise here, and a concession there, to avoid the disapproval of either extreme. This is a hopeless course, and must end in the abandonment of all that is really definite and vital. Peace must not be purchased at the expense of truth. This is too

* Rev. Canon Wordsworth.

dear a price to pay for it; and our gain, in that case, would prove a miserable loss.

No; what I would desire to feel myself, and to see in others, is decision—the most uncompromising decision in essentials—and a spirit of forbearance in matters of inferior importance. Let worldly polemics speak and write sharply, and devour one another, if it must be so; but let Christians, and especially Christian Ministers—the servants of a meek and loving Master, who was never known to strive, nor cry, neither did any man hear his voice in the streets—let *them* utter only the accents of love; opposing, indeed, what they see to be errors with all boldness, but at the same time with Christian meekness and gentleness. Our minds should be made up on all cardinal points with much prayer and thoughtfulness; and then there should be a clear out-speaking of the great truths which we have been led to adopt. This is quite consistent with the determination to maintain a kind and brotherly spirit towards those, whose vision, as regards minor points, somewhat differs from our own; for since we all “see through a glass darkly,” there may, and will, be various shades of opinion on things not clearly defined: and

surely these may be held and expressed without bitterness.

We are none of us sufficiently careful, perhaps, to avoid the unnecessary use of expressions which we find to grate upon some ears, and that particular phraseology which may possibly be considered as distinctive of a party. And there have not been wanting in any age men, who have prejudiced the cause of the Gospel, by mistaking the shibboleth of party for the essence of truth.

Again, we hear some men say: "There must be Parties in the Church: there ever have been, and there ever will be." Still, the spirit of party need not prevail over the spirit of love. We may regard with much concern those who have adopted what we consider to be mistaken views. We may use every effort to lead them into a sounder and safer path. But if we oppose them with fierceness and can scarcely allow ourselves to speak of them without a feeling of irritation being excited, then we clearly pass the boundary of Christian love—nay, we forfeit all hope of ultimate agreement, which a more conciliatory course might give us. It has been truly said, that, "when men

hate in the name of God, theirs is no half-hatred."

Often, too, we have heard this argument used—"If your views are fixed, you must needs side with one party or the other; otherwise you will be but a waverer, a borderer, a trimmer." It is true, if our views are clearly defined, and are firmly held, there are those who will class us with one section or the other. Still this does not necessitate a virulent spirit of antagonism, nor does it cut us off from that brotherly feeling, which the bond of a common faith and a common ministry should foster.

Let us learn to draw a distinction between virulence and firmness—between a hostile and contentious spirit, and a bold adherence to certain fixed principles. The one will tend to strengthen the Church; the other to rend it.

Whilst we rejoice in the conviction, that there exists at the present moment among our Clergy, and our Church members generally, a far more brotherly spirit than did prevail a few years back; and whilst we may hail this as a most true and blessed evidence of the reviving presence of Christ in our body; we can not conceal from our-

selves the fact, that there are still painful divisions among us, that there is still a spirit of party which estranges us from one another, and which makes brethren look with cold suspicion on each other.

How can these wounds be healed? Certainly not by vain and empty complainings. We must individually do what in us lies to stem the evil. Each one in his own little circle may diffuse a more loving and Christian spirit. And let us remember, for our comfort and encouragement, that a blessing is promised to all who labor in healing divisions and restoring unity. Strike as hard as you will against sin. Speak as boldly as you can for the truth. But even in the most extreme case, let all see in you the spirit of a Christian brother, and the mind of Christ himself.

There are times, however, when the most peace-loving among us *may* feel ourselves called upon to take up the weapons of controversy. If so, we must not shrink from it. Our natural aversion must be overcome. We can but pray earnestly that God would keep us from all unseemly violence of words and manner; for "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;" and no erring Brother will by such means be won from his errors,

no wounds of the Church thus healed. When our cause is the cause of God, and when the points at issue are points of vital importance, we are bound to contend with earnestness; but it should be an earnestness which "suffereth long, and is kind." "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."

In our intercourse then with our brethren, let us endeavor to maintain a meek and loving temper; and we may be the means of healing many a sore, and of scattering blessings all around us.

Having spoken about *our Intercourse with others*, let me now say a word or two about RECREATION. Here again it is extremely difficult to lay down rules which shall apply to every one. Doubtless the Christian Minister, as well as other men, needs his seasons of Recreation. His mind is often sorely taxed, and some bodily or mental relaxation is often indispensable. But the class of amusements, which in his case is deemed legitimate, is somewhat limited. What is deemed allowable for another man may be wrong for *him*. He has been solemnly set apart for God. He is the

Lord's Messenger to a fallen world. The conversion of souls, the leading them to Christ, the preparing them for a better world, is his great work. He is one who has much to do with heaven. Any amusement then of a frivolous or boisterous nature is unfit for him — any thing which brings him in contact with ungodly persons, or which is likely to disturb and overbalance his religious tone. As a rule, he should avoid places of public diversion, even those which the world deems reputable. We can not tell what company may be found there, or what may happen there. Happily in these days a Clergyman who indulges in the boisterous recreations and gayeties of life is rarely to be met with. Such an one is condemned by common consent. Even the most worldly are heard to put in their veto.

But there are certain amusements, which, although innocent in themselves, a Minister had better in general avoid. For although they might cause perhaps no offense when engaged in by ordinary Christians, when indulged in by a Clergyman they may hurt the conscience of the weak. All too that is permitted does not edify, and a Minister should ever seek to edify. And after all, if he should err in abstaining, he will be erring on the safe

side; and so long as his conscience is clear, he will be sparing himself much self-reproach. And even if this should entail something of self-denial, still should not the joys of his high profession more than compensate for any privation to which for his Master's sake he subjects himself?

Some kind of relaxation we all need; and our strength will fail if we have it not. Sunday being the day, perhaps, of the greatest labor to us, we need to have, as it were, another Sabbath in each week, when we may enjoy a little cessation from actual toil. Many clergymen find it of great mental, as well as physical, advantage to make Monday, as far as possible, a holiday. And most of us find that our minds need to be braced for exertion by a few weeks' vacation in the year. The means too of exploring those beautiful regions, both at home and abroad, where the works of nature afford such varied scenes for physical and mental refreshment, are now brought so within our reach, that most of us can enjoy a little summer tour far away from our home of labor and anxiety. Indeed I feel so persuaded that we all require some rest-day in each week, and some resting period in the course of each year, that I would almost venture to speak of obtain-

ing it as a duty we owe both to ourselves and to our people. The bow needs to be at times unstrung. The weary throat and the aching head cry out for rest; and will surely suffer in some way or other if it is not granted. I believe that we should do more work, and do it more effectually, if we gave the body and the mind their due of relaxation.

But if we leave our parishes for a time, let us not forget to carry with us our ministerial character. When away from our people, we may be tempted to throw off the outward garb, and the inward feelings of a Christian Pastor. But this is wrong. There are eyes upon us still. We are Ministers not *somewhere*, but *everywhere*; not to *some*, but to *all*.

Very grievous injury has frequently been done to the cause of religion by the inconsistent conduct of Clergymen during seasons of recreation, especially when travelling on the Continent. I would venture to throw out a few suggestions for making a needful season of recreation a time also of spiritual improvement, as it *ought* to be, and with care *may* be.

If, as is usually the case, two or more are travelling or sojourning together, let each day, if possible, begin and end with united prayer and the reading of God's Word.

Let the recollection of your connection with your flock be kept up in your mind by frequent and earnest intercessory prayer on their behalf; and by taking every now and then some Text of Scripture, and thinking out from it the leading points of a discourse to be preached on your return home; for which you may even be gathering illustrations on your way.

Try to do some good wherever you are, whether to your own Countrymen, or to the Foreigners with whom you may be thrown.

Solomon's caution, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," is specially needful for a season of relaxation. For if you be not watchful, a frivolous and worldly spirit will creep in; and at times you may be tempted to regard, perhaps with almost a feeling of repulsiveness, the monotonous routine of parochial duty at home, with all its circumstances of poor cottages, close sick-rooms, crowded schools, and the many daily trials of temper and patience, of faith and hope, to which an earnest Minister must be subject. And this may lead you for a time to throw off your clerical character; and to speak, and feel, and act, much as others do.

It is a little hard, I know, for a young man,

full of health and spirits, to put a clog upon himself, and to give up many of those manlier amusements which have afforded him so much enjoyment in past years, and in which he has hitherto indulged with little apparent injury to himself. But let him bear in mind that he has now taken upon himself a most sacred charge, and has launched into a new course. Both as a Christian, and as a Christian Minister, he is now doubly and forever devoted to the Lord's service.

CHAPTER XIV.

ORDER AND PUNCTUALITY.

ORDER and Punctuality are requisite for the formation of every Christian character; and especially so in their case who minister in holy things. "Method," as Mrs. More says, "is the very hinge of business; and there is no method without punctuality. Punctuality is important, as it gains time. It is like packings things in a box: a good packer will get in half as much more than a bad one. The calmness of mind which it produces is another advantage. A disorderly man is always in a hurry. He has no time to speak with you, for he is going elsewhere; and when he gets there he is too late for his business, or he must hurry away to another before he can finish it. Punctuality gives weight to a character. 'Such a man has made an appointment; then I know that he will keep it.' And this generates punctuality in others; for like most virtues, it propagates itself. Servants and children must

be punctual, when their leader is so. Appointments indeed become debts; I owe you punctuality, if I have made an appointment with you; and have no right to throw away your time, if I do my own." The cultivation of the habit of punctuality I would specially urge upon my ministerial brethren. Let it be a matter of conscience with you never to be late for any thing, and never to act as one in a hurry.

Without order too the greatest activity and the most self-denying exertions will run to waste. A little work will be done here, and a little more there; but the effect produced as a whole will be small indeed. And much labor will be lost, for want of the methodical mind to plan and regulate its expenditure.

First, there should be a prearranged plan in *the proceedings of each day*. This plan, however, need not be ostensible. It should *exist*, without being *seen*. We should be regular in the disposal of time, and careful of *moments*. How much time is often lost, and how much doubt and perplexity is often caused, by not knowing what we are going to do next! How many separate journeys are often taken, when one would suffice! How many desultory efforts

are made, when one well-planned and well-timed effort would probably succeed! Each day, and each hour in the day, should have, as nearly as may be, its appointed work. And when this is the case, it is wonderful how our time and strength may be economized. There is a Chinese maxim which reminds us, that "One day is worth three to him who does every thing in its order."

Then there should be order in our *Reading*. It is very desirable, especially for the young Minister, as I have already hinted, to keep up a certain *fixed course of study*—not merely reading such books as are suited to his particular taste, but such as afford a healthy exercise for his mind, or add to his store of knowledge, or give a right impulse to his heart. Especially should he be very careful as to the manner in which his *Scripture* studies are conducted. For the sake of his own spiritual progress, and in order that he may be able to feed the flock committed to him, he should be "mighty in the Scriptures." And who can attain to this high excellence, unless he is constantly feeding on the pasture of God's Word? Where it is possible then let the Bible be read *methodically*, both as to the hours set apart for

the purpose, and also as to the plan we adopt for the study of the holy volume.

There should be order too in our *Preparation for the Pulpit*. We should have our regular seasons for this important work, not deferring it (as has been already hinted) to the very eve before we are called to preach, but allowing the subject to pass again and again through our minds, and to be fairly weighed and digested by us.

I have sometimes heard it objected by Clergymen, that they *can not* bring their minds to adopt this or that method — that they can not, for instance, prepare their sermons till the end of the week. I believe, on the contrary, that by a little training we may bring our minds to almost any thing; and that a slight effort will enable us to pass out of habits which have almost become a part of our nature. It is well to try this, if only as a matter of discipline.

So too in our parochial arrangements there should be a well-ordered system. Some Clergymen are constantly venturing on fresh plans—either starting additional public services, or dropping existing ones, or changing their hours, or in other ways needlessly tampering with them. This is most undesirable.

And those who act thus will find that they both forfeit their own character for regularity, and also that they are impairing the regular habits of their congregations. People like to see stability in our ministry—a steadily maintained system. They like to feel that they can reckon on their spiritual guide, and that they know where to find him. If the Pastor is restless, the Flock soon get unsettled, and then lose their confidence. A Clergyman should by all means avoid the character of an innovator.

In short, the Minister should in all things *act upon a plan*. Without positively binding himself down by rules, he should act as upon rule, and not allow himself to be carried away by the mere ebb and flow of circumstances. Doubtless no man is, in one sense, less master of his own life than he is; nevertheless he will gain much for his own soul, and for his ministry, by daily introducing into his life as much regularity as it will admit of—always, however, being ready to sacrifice regularity to any pressing circumstances that may require a deviation from it.

And if there be order in all that concerns the Minister, there will soon spring up a kindred spirit in his flock. “As with the people, so with the priest,” is as true with us,

in any sense, as it was with the Jewish Church. Good habits as well as evil are catching, though not perhaps in the same degree.

I may here be allowed to say a word or two in strong commendation of *Early Rising*; for this, it must be allowed, will conduce not a little to the promotion of Order and Regularity. I look upon this almost as a Christian duty; at least where there is no impediment in the way. And I am persuaded that it tends not a little to our health, comfort, and usefulness. "Let your sleep," says Jeremy Taylor, "be necessary and healthful, not idle and expensive of time beyond the needs and conveniences of nature: and sometimes be curious to see the preparations which the sun makes when he is coming forth from his chambers of the East." That hour which is redeemed from sleep, in the very prime of the day, is far more precious than any other. No time is so valuable for devotion; and at no hour is the mind so alert for active employment. Make up your mind to be *an early riser*, and you will soon find that you are abundantly repaid for any little effort it may have cost you.

"The hour of dawn," writes Vinet, "is the golden hour. Later in the day a crowd of

ideas, relating to things external and internal, make a noisy confusion in the mind. At the hour of dawn nothing has preceded our freshest feelings and nothing can embarrass them. This was the habit of the Royal Prophet, who said, 'In the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up;' 'I have prevented the dawning of the morning.' Who can use this language more appropriately than the Minister? Doubtless, this is a victory over sense; but then the Minister ought to die unto himself daily."

Before closing this chapter, I can not but draw attention to the general subject of *Activity*, which should especially characterize the habits and conduct of a Parochial Minister. If he has health and strength, he should give it all cheerfully to God, and to those over whom he is placed. There is ignorance to be removed, broken hearts to be comforted, and souls to be won; and the time is short. Try to feel as much as possible that the Parish is your home and sphere, and that you have but little spare time for other claims than those which are connected with your special ministrations. The man of business has his appointed work to do, and his time is precious to him. The

lawyer has his hours of close application, and but few spare moments when he can absolutely throw off his calling. And does our high and momentous office demand less zeal and self-denying labor? If we have calculated on a life of ease and inactivity, we have fatally mistaken our profession.

An old Minister thus writes to a young one: "Permit me to counsel you from the very beginning of your ministerial course to resist every temptation to indolence. The proper rest or relaxation for a student is exercise. Sit upright on a hard chair during your study time. Keep an opening for fresh air, and have a moderate heat. If in good health, let not the rain or snow prevent you. Neither imagine you must be muffled, as if you were in Siberia, or a delicate female. Our times require manly, enterprising, diligent Ministers: let us not enervate ourselves."

But it is not enough to *put on an air of occupation*. Some are busy and bustling, and yet do but little. And this may for a while pass current. The hero of the world is the man who makes a bustle—the man who raises the dust about him. And this show of activity and stir will often win for us a certain amount of applause. But our people will soon see

through this and will despise us for it. And what is such labor compared with that of many an earnest, silent worker, who perhaps cheerfully encounters difficulties, dangers, anxieties, weary days, and sleepless nights—yea, and counts them as nothing, so that he may gain the end for which he is striving. "At one period," says an aged Minister, "I preached and read five times on a Sunday, and rode sixteen miles. But what did it cost me? Nothing! Yet most men would have looked on whilst I was trotting from village to village, with all the dogs barking at my heels, and would have called me a hero, whereas if they were to look at me now, they would call me an idle fellow."

Many a young man thinks that he is doing God service by trying his strength and jeopardizing his health to the utmost. He falls into the mistake of supposing that the largest amount of work must necessarily produce the greatest return. Instead of regarding his strength as a boon from God, and endeavoring to employ it to the best advantage, he expends it with reckless prodigality, impelled by the erroneous notion that he is winning to himself a crown of self-inflicted martyrdom.

I shall not, I hope, be mistaken. I would

not check the energy of any; but what I desire to recommend is such a sober, reasonable, and judicious expenditure of our powers, as will be likely, under God's blessing, to produce real fruit.

If, however, your parish be small, and you have but little work necessarily connected with it, then *make* work for yourself—not by encroaching on the sphere of other men—but by undertaking some legitimate employment growing out of your position. If you have but few to visit let your visits to these be all the more frequent, and give yourself more to your school. If you have but few souls committed to your care, enter more minutely into the wants of those few. The man who watches over one of our large city parishes is forced to regard his people in masses: you may regard yours in detail, studying each individual character and dealing with it separately. The one is like a visiting Physician in a crowded hospital: the other is like him who is able to enter into the case of each of his patients in private. If your pastoral sphere is limited, give yourself more to prayer, to reading, to individualizing. And stand ready, if God should call you to leave your post of comparative ease for one of more extended labor.

Some things mentioned in this Chapter may seem almost too trivial to be so much dwelt upon; but I have in my own experience so often seen the influence they have upon ministerial usefulness, that I do not hesitate to press them upon my brethren.

CHAPTER XV.

MINISTERIAL SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

OUR endeavor should ever be to succeed. This should be our constant aim; but not our *sole*, and I would almost say not our *chief*, aim. Our great desire should be to do the work of our Master, to obey Him in all things, and to bring glory to His name. We should leave no stone unturned, that our work may be effectual. But still, bearing in mind that it rests with the Lord alone to give the increase when and how He pleases, we should patiently and believingly wait upon him for his blessing. And even if He should seem to withhold the former and the latter rain, we should still labor on, and sow the seed, as those who are assured that their labor *can not* eventually be in vain in the Lord.

Our wish for success is a natural one. But it is to be feared that there is frequently much of *self* in it. Why do we desire success? Is it not too often because we like the *éclat* and

the reward that follows? We like the credit that it brings to us. We are, in fact, more desirous for personal eminence than for God's glory, and *to succeed* than *to be useful*.

Hence it too often happens, that we take comparatively little interest in the conversion of sinners through the instrumentality of *others*, as if "our regard to the glory of God was measured by opportunities afforded for the display of *our own glory*. We wish to stand alone. We can not bear any thing that shines too near our own brightness." Thus we are sometimes apt to disparage, and regard with jealousy, the successful efforts of a Brother who is working with us, or whose sphere of labor is near our own; for the more distant he is from us the better we can afford to be generous, and to rejoice at the blessing which seems to rest on his work. Some of us, it may be, will discover on examining our hearts, that we have more of this feeling than we are aware of; for it stealthily creeps in and influences us when we least expect it. But surely such a spirit as this will sour our own feelings, and act as a withering blast upon the fair fruit of our ministry.

Happy those who can rejoice if a fellow-servant be exalted, so long as the Master is

thereby honored, and in whose breasts the Baptist's words find a hearty echo, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

The following was the language of a devout servant of Christ: "I have no right to complain or be discouraged, since the feebler the means, the more He is glorified. And I hope that, some time or other, I shall learn to be willing to be counted a fool, that all the glory may redound to His wisdom. But this is a hard lesson to learn. To be willing to be nothing, to rejoice to be nothing, that God may be all in all—to glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me—this is the temper which I pine and hunger after. But alas! it appears at a distance so great, that I despair of ever reaching anywhere near it in this world. If we could put God entirely in the place of self, consider His will as our will, His honor as our honor, His interest as our interest, and pursue it accordingly, how happy should we be!"*

It is difficult to know beforehand how far our work has been successful or otherwise. Sometimes we may seem to be doing much, and to be producing an amazing effect, but the work may be only superficial, and may soon

* The Rev. E. Payson.

come to naught. Or, on the other hand, we may appear to toil in vain, when perhaps we may be effectually sowing the seed for a future harvest: another may enter into our labors. Again, there may be many an one benefited by our ministry, of whose conversion or growth in grace we may know nothing till the Great Day. Let this thought be ever present in our minds—When I preach, or when I visit the sick, I am but a mere instrument in the Lord's hands, like an axe in the hands of the woodman. I am employed by Him, and I can do no more than He enables me to do. To speak to the ear, is my duty; but to touch the heart and to convert the soul, is His work. And never shall I be condemned for any failures or neglect, except those failures be the consequence of my own unfaithfulness.

But supposing we are *successful* in our ministry—what then?

1. Let us *give the glory where it is due*. If our congregations are large, and our preaching seems to meet with acceptance—if in our visits we are greeted with a hearty welcome—let us not forget to whom we owe it all: “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise.” And for every special case of

success let us not omit the expression of a thankful heart to Him, who has been graciously pleased to own and bless our unworthy services.

2. Let us *keep ourselves as much as possible in the back-ground*. Archbishop Whately observes: "There are two different kinds of orators, the distinction between whom might be thus illustrated: When the Moon shines brightly, we are apt to say, 'How beautiful is this moonlight!' But in the day-time, 'How beautiful are the trees, the fields, the mountains!' We never speak of the Sun that makes them so. Just in the same way the really greatest Orator shines like the Sun, making you think much of the things he is speaking of. The *second*-best shines like the moon, making you think much of *him* and his *eloquence*."

3. Let us watch against *Pride and Self-Complacency*. If Satan can only exalt us in our own eyes he has succeeded in opening an effectual door by which he may gain an entrance. A young Minister is especially exposed to this. He enters a parish, and finds himself well received. Perhaps he is more acceptable than his predecessor. The freshness and ardor of his young heart finds many a response. The con-

gregation increases. Many a word of praise reaches his ears. His sermons are applauded. His visits are appreciated. An atmosphere of popularity surrounds him. But he is on slippery ground, and if he is not very watchful he will fall. It should be remembered that *he* is not necessarily doing well, whom man approves, but whom God approves. Take care then that you are not misled by the empty applause of the world's flatterers, or even that of the more religious among your congregation. But rather say with one who well knew the dangers to which his own heart was exposed, "Men frequently admire me, and I am pleased; but I abhor the pleasure that I feel."*

4. Let us not be carried away by *the outward glitter of success*. This may exist without any of that increase which is of God. We may gain applause, we may fill our churches, we may see our people hanging on our lips, all may go on smoothly; and yet no souls may be brought to love Christ, and no sheep gathered into His fold: There may be a bright, showy tinsel, but the metal may not prove true, when we come to sound it. Many a man is so dazzled by the glowing appearance of success, that he cannot see its hollowness, but fancies that a

* Henry Martyn.

great work is effected. How often it happens that another, of whom we may have thought but little, may in many points be our superior, and may in fact be working more effectually than we are working, though God may see fit for some wise reason to withhold from him the apparent success which crowns our labors.

On the other hand, should a Pastor have to mourn over an *unsuccessful* ministry, what then?

1. He should not murmur against God; but he should acknowledge himself *unworthy to be more greatly honored*.

How sorely is many a Christian Minister sometimes tried by reverses. Perhaps there was a time when all went prosperously with him. His church was filled to overflowing—the congregation attentive—approval met him on every side. But God has changed the scene.

“ High thoughts at first, and visions high
 Are ours of easy victory;
 The word we bear seems so Divine,
 So framed for Adam’s guilty line,
 That none (unto ourselves we say)
 Of all his sinning, suffering race,
 Will hear that word, so full of grace,
 And coldly turn away.

But soon a sadder mood comes round,
 High hopes have fallen to the ground,
 And the Ambassadors of Peace
 Go weeping that men will not cease
 To strive with Heaven; they inly mourn
 That suffering men will not be blest,
 That weary men refuse to rest,
 And wanderers to return."*

Discouragements now spring up—the tide of popularity begins to flow less strongly—we feel that the attachment of our hearers towards our person and ministry decays—plans which seemed to succeed have lost their interest—the edge of ardor is blunted. Ah! this is a trial indeed; but it may be sent to show us what we are resting on. We may greatly need this very discipline, that we may be simply thrown upon God, and may feel that the whole matter is with Him. There is a lesson for us to learn; and we should pray that we may have a heart to learn it.

We often hear Ministers, in such cases, casting the blame on their people—speaking of them as impracticable—and even using a dissatisfied, complaining tone in addressing them. When we resort to this, farewell to

* Trench.

all our usefulness. Our duty is rather to suspect ourselves; not to look *without* for some cause that will account for our failure, but rather to look *within* to see if the fault be not there.

2. We should *persevere* in faith, though we see but little fruit of our labors, knowing that the desired blessing can, and will, come at God's bidding. It may come too when we least expect it, and by means that we least reckon upon. It is related of a certain Preacher, that he was engaged to officiate one Sunday in a distant church. It was in the depth of winter, and the roads were nearly impassable with snow; he however pursued his way, and, on reaching the church, found not a single individual there. One solitary person at length entered, and he began the service. Some years after, he and his auditor happened accidentally to meet, when the pleasing fact was told him that that sermon had proved the means of his conversion.

3. We should seriously *inquire the cause* of our apparent failure. It is true, success is the Lord's gift, and He bestows it when and how He will. But *usually* He makes it follow as the result of diligent and faithful la-

bor. It is a solemn and painful thing for a Shepherd of souls to feel that his service is not effectual, and that no sheep are gathered into the fold—that he preaches, but men remain unmoved, that no real conversions take place among his flock. How is it?

He should first look into *his own heart*. Does he feel an interest in the souls committed to his trust? Is he really concerned for their salvation? Does the love of Christ constrain him? Does he pray enough for his people? Does he plead for them one by one before God? Is he earnest in his entreaties for guidance in his work, and for a blessing on it? Does he ask God to open the windows of Heaven, and pour out a large measure of His Holy Spirit? Is he himself walking with God? “It may be (says Traill, speaking of a lack of prayer in Ministers) the reason why some Ministers of meaner gifts and parts are more successful than some that are far above them in abilities; not because they preach better, so much as because they *pray* more.”

Then he should look to *the means he is using*. Is he careful in preparing for the pulpit, and diligent in visiting his flock? Is there nothing in his manner which repels,

and which might be corrected? Is he kind, and affectionate, and gentle among his people, as a Father towards his children? Is his preaching simple enough, warm enough, earnest enough? Is his general tone, both at home and in his parish, such as to commend him and his message to his people, so as to give them an antecedent inclination to receive him?

Bishop Patrick, speaking of the learned John Smith, says: "He had resolved (as he one day told me) very much to lay aside other studies, and to *travail in the salvation of men's souls*, after whose good he most earnestly thirsted." It was said too of A-leine, that "he was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls; and to this end he poured out his very heart in prayer and preaching. He imparted not the Gospel of God only, but his own soul. His supplications and his expositions many times were so affectionate, so full of holy zeal, life, and vigor, that they quite overcame his hearers."

"Surely," says Dr. Miller, "if, after the ministrations of years, we lack all tokens of the Divine blessing upon our preaching; if our people are still lifeless and worldly;

our congregation a valley of dry bones ; no awakening, no growth, no fruitfulness ; this must give us a solemn pause." "The want of ministerial success," it has been said, "is a tremendous circumstance, never to be contemplated without horror." "How," exclaimed Gregory, "can I sustain the last judgment, seeing so little fruit to my labors?"

One who pleads ably for a more earnest ministry asks: "Shall we never institute the inquiry, Why have I not succeeded better in my ministry? In what way can I account for it that the truth I preach is not more influential, and the doctrine of the cross is not, as it was intended to be, 'the power of God unto the salvation' of souls? Are we often questioning ourselves thus—Is there no new method that can be tried, no new scheme that can be devised, to increase the efficiency of my ministerial and pastoral labors? Surely it might be supposed that such inquiries would be often instituted into the results of so momentous a ministry as ours. Are the earnest Tradesman, Soldier, Lawyer, and Mechanic, satisfied to go on as they have done, though with ever so little success? Do we not see in all departments of human action, where the mind is really intent on some

great object, and where success has not been obtained in proportion to the labor bestowed, a dissatisfaction with past modes of action, and a determination to try new ones? And should we, who watch for souls, and labor for immortality, be indifferent to success, and to the plans by which it might be secured? In calling for new methods, we want no new doctrines, no new principles, no startling eccentricities, no wild irregularities, no vagaries of enthusiasm, no frenzies of passions—nothing but what the most sober judgment and the soundest reason could approve. But we do want a more inventive, as well as a more fervent, zeal, in seeking the great end of our ministry.” We must review our preaching—its prevailing theme—its spirit—its general tone and character. Is there not some deficiency of statement, some error of doctrine? Is the trumpet-note full, strong, clear? It is not, however, our preaching only that we must review, but the general tone and character of our public ministry, and of our daily life. Thus we shall ascertain how our failure, if it exists, can be accounted for, so that if possible a remedy may be applied.

After all, if the unsuccessful Minister is conscious of no particular failing, then let him meekly and patiently bear his trial; and

quietly work on, assured that the blessing, like the dew, is actually descending in some unseen form, or that it will, like the latter rain, come more sensibly, when the fitting moment arrives.

Many a clergyman has found a time of great prosperity, and of ministerial success, a time of real danger to his own soul; whereas a season of spiritual scarceness may have been one of rich and abundant blessing. And we should remember this — that visible success is no true criterion of our usefulness. God sometimes grants a richer harvest to one pastor than another. One may sow in tears, and another reap in joy: still each in his measure may be helping on the great work which God would have accomplished. Several woodmen may be employed at a tree; but it does not follow that he who deals the successful blow which lowers the tree is the best workman. So is it with the work done for souls. We should remember that our reward hereafter will not be according to the measure of our *success*, but of our *faithfulness*. Our Master will not say, “Well done, good and *successful* servant,” but, “Well done, good and *faithful* servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

CHAPTER XVI.

MINISTERIAL DIFFICULTIES AND TRIALS.

“IN the first beginning of Christianity,” says Burnet, “no man would reasonably think of taking orders, unless he had in him the spirit of martyrdom.” But the ministerial profession in the present day is often looked upon as one of tranquil ease and unruffled calmness. And many a man before ordination has mapped out for himself a life of light burdens and few trials. But ask one who has the experience of a few years — one who has gone heartily to his work — and he will tell you of difficulties which are forever crowding in upon the course of a Christian Pastor. True, the path is easy enough to one who is content with a mere perfunctory discharge of the outward duties of his calling. But the earnest, devout, active minister of Christ, who is concerned for his own salvation and that of his flock, meets with trials, under which his heart of

tentimes well-nigh sinks. He loves his profession. He would not exchange his sphere of labor for the highest earthly post of honor. But he has fightings without, and fears within, anxieties, perplexities, difficulties, more than fall to the lot of ordinary men. The ministry, according to Gregory Nazianzen, is "a tempest for the soul." St. Chrysostom says: "A bishop is more agitated by cares and storms than the sea is by the winds and tempests."

Away, then, with the notion that our path is to be invariably an easy one. There is no Scripture warrant to expect it, and experience tells us far otherwise. When our Lord con-signed the publication of his truth to the Apostles, He taught them to look forward to trial and suffering as the condition of their ministry—"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake;" "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service;" "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." In fact, they daily found themselves, though armed with a high authority, and strengthened by an Almighty power, exposed to the extremest pressure of want, pain, destitution, and contempt. "Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and

are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." Though endued with a miraculous power for the exercise of their commission, they possessed nothing supernatural for the alleviation of their own private distresses—nothing which might lead them to think that they, any more than those who were to succeed them, were the darlings of Heaven.

Such was the lot of the first Preachers of the Gospel. And the Christian minister now must be also prepared to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and must beware of falling in with that easy, soft, luxurious life which is so attractive to our natural inclinations.

It may be well to particularize some of a Pastor's difficulties and trials.

First, there is the difficulty of *not knowing how to act in special cases*. A young clergyman, in entering upon his spiritual charge, has certain general rules to guide him in the performance of his ordinary duties. But there are cases forever springing up, to which he must apply a course of action varying according to the emergency. Happy for him if he has a wise and experienced elder by his side, who is able and ready to give him counsel, and to direct him in his new path. But many

find themselves alone—isolated—cut off from counsellors—set down in the midst of strangers. And act they must, and that with little or no experience to guide them, and in matters too of the highest spiritual moment. This is undoubtedly a great trial; and yet this may result in a peculiar advantage, if it necessitates and develops a man's own judgment. He must, however, be careful lest he should decide rashly, without viewing the case in all its bearings. And in every difficulty he should remember that there is one Counsellor above, on whose guidance we may depend, and who has always an open ear for us when we apply to Him. And as many of us look back on our past career, on the days of our early ministry, are we not lost in wonder to think how graciously He has guided us, and from how many false and perhaps fatal steps He has in His great mercy restrained us?

But it is not only at starting that perplexing cases present themselves. They are daily occurring. A nice question arises, as to whether we should go to this place, or continue that undertaking. Or a Parishioner, who has got into some worldly entanglement, calls to ask advice. Or, in our round of visits, a case of conscience comes before us, which

it is no easy matter to decide upon. Or we find ourselves by the bed of a sick person, who is suffering from some peculiar distress of mind, and we scarcely know how to deal with it. These are things which make us feel our weakness, and our need of counsel and of caution; and these are the things which constitute much of the wear and tear of a Minister's health and spirits. Few minds can fail to be anxious, when we remember that on our words and actions hangs perhaps the well-being of immortal souls.

Secondly, the Minister often *feels it his duty to take notice of some particular sin*. And should he shrink from it? The Bible tells him that it is clearly a part of his office: "I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me."

But how difficult is this duty! What wisdom is needed! What gentleness should be mixed with our boldness! How should our faithfulness be tempered by love! How difficult to know when to pass by sin, and when to rebuke it! how to speak in the best and most effectual manner; and, what is perhaps still more difficult, when to be silent!

If a sin has been committed *in public*, and

has caused a general scandal, we must notice it *in public*, and "rebuke it before all, that others also may fear." But in such cases (and thank God they are few) we should show that the sinner is loved by us, though his fault is denounced; and men should plainly see that it is not without much reluctance and great pain that we can speak of it.

But if it is *not a public one*, then by all means try what *private* admonition will do. And let no *unnecessary* notoriety be given to the offense. It is generally better not to censure a man in the presence of his wife or his child. Seize a moment for speaking to him when he is alone. Watch your opportunity; and avoid the appearance of making a direct attack upon him. Let your words be few, and those displaying the spirit of your Master; remembering too that you are His minister, and not a stern magistrate. "It may be for the good of the sinner, as well as for the honor of God and the prevention of scandal, that the sin be covered, rather than exposed to the gaze of men." Bishop Burnet says: "There may be ways fallen upon of reproving the worst of men in so soft a manner, that if they are not reclaimed, yet they shall not be irritated or made worse by it, which is but

too often the effect of an indiscreet reproof." The object is to gain a brother, not to wound him, or to make the rent worse by an ill-timed or harsh exposure. The Psalmist says: "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

A spirit of *Christian love* is never more sweetly exhibited, and never more required, than in the matter of reproof. The very act of rebuking has a tendency to ruffle one's own temper. The sharp retort, or the unreasonable defense, may easily throw us off our guard. We should therefore especially try to exercise a spirit of self-control.

But most of all is *prayer* needed on such occasions. If you intercede with God for the person who has transgressed, and if you ask God to guide you in speaking to him, then you will be nearly sure to use a tone and manner which He approves, and which He will bless.

Thirdly, *we are often misunderstood*; and this is peculiarly distressing. To have our motives and actions misinterpreted is no small disappointment. But was it not so with our Master? He could say: "Every day they wrest my words." When He mixed with the

ungodly to do them good, they accused Him of being "a Friend of Publicans and Sinners." And His servants, in like manner, must not marvel, if they are only partially understood. We must not be surprised if our tenderness is mistaken for weakness—our charity, which hopeth all things, ridiculed as credulity—our boldness regarded as though it sprang from a love of power and authority. However, if our conscience acquits us, all is well. And, after all, we do not labor to please men, but God, who trieth our hearts.

Sometimes too we shall have our labors undervalued. We shall have no credit allowed us for the toil—and especially the mental toil—which we spend over our people. The laboring Poor especially can hardly appreciate any thing as toil which is not actual manual labor. The wear and tear of mind, and the labor of study, and the anxious feelings we have about our people, few can understand. This, however, is what we must expect, and it need not distress us, if only we are seeking to approve ourselves to God. We may say, and that with all cheerfulness, our "judgment is with the Lord, and our work with our God."

Fourthly, in our private reading of Scripture, we are too often tempted to *read officially*

and for others, instead of getting instruction and refreshment for our own souls. How apt are we to say, "This verse would make a striking text to preach upon," or, "This idea might be worked into my sermon;" without at the same time saying: "This passage is what I need for *myself*—here is spiritual nourishment for *my own soul!*"

"How common is it," says the devoted Traill, "for Ministers to neglect their own vineyard! When we read the word, we read it *as Ministers*, to know what we should teach, rather than what we should learn *as Christians*. The honest Believer meditates that he may excite his graces; but Ministers often meditate only to increase their gifts. Oh! how hard it is to be a Minister and a Christian in some of these acts! We are still conversant about the things of God; it is our study all the week long. This is our great advantage. But take heed to thyself, lest ordinary meddling with Divine things bring on an ordinary and indifferent impression of them; and then their fruit to thee, and thy benefit by them, is almost gone, and hardly recovered."

Fifthly, the difficulty of dealing with *opposers* is one which the young Minister especially will feel. An infidel attacks us,

or we feel conscientiously bound to open the question with him. We feel strong in our own cause, and long to scatter his feeble arguments to the winds. We get into a discussion with him. And we perhaps leave off ruffled in our own spirit, and having, most likely, failed to convince him of his error. I doubt whether direct argument avails much in such cases; at all events, it should be conducted with much temper and moderation. The mind is usually too much warped, and too anxious for victory, to yield to the ablest reasoning. Perhaps we should be more likely to gain our point by watching for an opportunity when the person's heart (which is the seat of the evil) may be somewhat softened by affliction or otherwise, and when a solemn word, feelingly spoken, may strike home. Or again, a book which is calculated to move his conscience, and to influence him in his calmer moments when passions are not excited, is sometimes found to be useful.

A rather less painful case is when a man opposes us on some question connected with our Church views. Here again little is ordinarily done by pointed argument and a spirit of antagonism. Far more is likely to be effected by quiet, Christian conversation, and, if a

seasonable opportunity occurs, by removing any prejudice which exists in the mind.

Sixthly, we are sometimes apt to make difficulties for ourselves by *needlessly intermeddling in secular matters*. Some have a craving for taking a part in the affairs of others. They like the importance which it gives them; and they court rather than avoid it. Whilst one who feels the greatness of his spiritual office will never shrink from making himself useful, where duty clearly and positively calls him, he will not, at the same time, willingly "serve tables," but rather give himself to the work to which he is more especially appointed.

Seventhly, we are often *perplexed by the various questions* which in these days agitate the Christian Church. It is at times trying not to see clearly which side to take. We feel a difficulty perhaps in according with the views of those whom we most esteem. Happy is it if we are thrown back upon God's Word; for we may rest assured of this, that no view is sound, and no course a safe one to follow, but those which are borne out by the plain, simple teaching of Scripture. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light

in them." Amidst all the floating opinions of the day, let the supremacy of God's inspired Word be our sole resting-place.

These are just a few of our difficulties and trials. But who can tell their number? difficulties which beset us in our closets, in our parishes, in the house of God, in the world!

But we have two great sources of consolation. One is, that God will help us through them, if we trust our own souls, and those of our people, to His fatherly care. The other is, that our difficulties serve as a wholesome discipline, keeping us humble, and leading us to a more confiding dependence on God. They are the stays and cords that keep us from being blown aside by the uncertain gusts of applause and success. They are the fire that "tries every man's work of what sort it is"—whether we are acting from love to our Master and His people, or from the mere wish to get praise from men. It has been remarked, that just as the insertion of a chemical test brings out the element to which it has affinity, so surely does opposition or trial, in an attempt to do good, make conspicuous the presence of unsound motives, if any such have existed.

Happy he who is willing boldly to meet,

and patiently to bear, the trials allotted to him! Happy he who struggles on in faith and hope! He shall one day exchange toil for rest. He shall lay down the cross, and wear the crown. He shall exchange his present scene of difficulties, anxieties, and trials, for one of undisturbed peace.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MINISTER'S JOYS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS.

IN the last chapter I dwelt on some of the trials and difficulties which are the portion of the Christian Minister. But if there are *peculiar* trials and difficulties in his case, so too are there joys and encouragements, of which none taste so largely as himself. For as the ordinary Christian has comforts and hopes beyond other men, so has it pleased God to give us spiritual pleasures and delights, which are for the most part unknown to those who fill not the ministerial office.

1. There is the joy of being *instrumental in saving souls*. We may labor hard and long, and it may be apparently in vain; but, provided we are faithful, we shall reap if we faint not. To be the means of awakening sinners, of comforting the afflicted, of building up the children of God, of leading men to heaven — oh! will not this more than compensate for any

little trials which beset our path? Surely, if the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, there can not be but joy in *his* heart whom God has employed in the blessed work of bringing that soul to Christ.

2. Our toils are often sweetened by the thought that *we labor, not for time merely, but for eternity.* There is a perpetuity about our work, which there is in no other class of employment. It is only the Christian Minister who can take up the Apostle's words, and say: "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord endureth forever; *and this is the word which we preach unto you.*" The Soldier endures much hardship, and encounters many a peril, that he may gain a little momentary renown for himself, or increase the present glory of his country. The Lawyer strains his intellect, that he may advance the passing interests of his client. The Philosopher rises up early and late takes rest, in the hope of making some discovery which shall enrich the store of existing knowledge. The Physician endeavors to relieve present pain, and to ward off or cure disease. But *we* soar far higher. Our aim is to do the work of God, to rescue immortal souls, to save men from an eternal hell, and to prepare them for an inheritance that will never fade away. This is the peculiar excellence and

hopefulness of our work — that there is “forever” written upon all with which we have to do.

3. Even when we fancy that but little is stirring among our people, we may encourage ourselves at times with the hope that *God may be carrying on a secret work of grace* in some heart. It may be the Lord has His hidden ones, though they be unknown to us — quiet, retiring, but no less real, Christians. We may hear nothing of these; there is no noise; and we think, perhaps, in the unbelief and foolishness of our hearts, they do not exist. But must there always be a sound when it rains? And can not children be born to the Lord, as the dew from the womb of the morning — silently and secretly? Yes; let the earnest and anxious Pastor cheer himself with the thought, that there will be some who shall be his joy and crown of rejoicing, whose faith and devotedness may be never known to him whilst he is here.

And, further, although his ministry may not be effecting *palpable* cases of conversion — though he may have none coming to him to inquire what they must do to be saved — still he may be doing a great work, in the way of building up those who are already awakened, and raising the general tone of his con-

gregation; as well as by restraining many a one from the direct commission of sin.

How often it happens, when a Minister has been giving way to despondency, and has been writing hard things against his own pastoral usefulness, some instance has unexpectedly come to his ears of a soul to whom his teaching has been blest! And how often, though he thinks it not, when his heart has been bowed down by some disappointment, there may be news which will rejoice his spirit actually on the way to him!

Then, even when things seem to be a little unfavorable, let him cheer up, and take a bright and hopeful view of his work, feeling assured that his labor can not be in vain in the Lord.

4. In most of our difficulties, we may console ourselves that they are *not peculiar to our own case*. In all probability they are such as are common to us all. And this will reconcile us to many a hard trial. Is there, for instance, much in our parish to distress and disappoint us? So is there in other parishes. Do we find our people immersed in this world's concerns, and hard to raise up to higher and better things? Ask other clergymen, and they will tell us the same tale; or, look into God's Word,

and we shall see that it is no other than we should be prepared to expect. Are we often pressed hard about our sermons? Do our minds sometimes flag, and do we find it difficult to provide food for our hungry congregations? Ah! this is what the best and most gifted have found. These are trials, but they are trials shared also by our fellow-laborers.

5. Another source of encouragement is, that when our people see us anxious to do our best, *they are generally disposed to appreciate the effort.* They will be suspicious where they see a great parade and loud professions. They will be impatient of a hard and authoritative manner. They will despise a man whose life is incongruous with his teaching. But when it is obvious that we are determined to labor humbly, affectionately, and earnestly among them, they will for the most part be kindly disposed toward us.

I believe, too, there is a special willingness in people to receive with consideration a *young* Minister. There is usually an antecedent prejudice in his favor. And though there will probably be a little rawness about his ministry, and sundry defects which only experience will correct, it has also its own peculiar advantages. The freshness, vigor, and warmth of youth

will carry with them a charm of their own, which maturer years in a measure dissipate.

6. Our grand comfort and encouragement under every drawback is, that Christ's true Ministers have *the promise of His abiding presence*. In our most trying moments—when mountains seem to rise before us—when heart and flesh are ready to fail us—when our strength of body or our powers of mind are perhaps overtaxed—is there not something unspeakably soothing in our Lord's assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"? He knows our frame; He takes account of our weaknesses; He remembers that we are but dust, and that He has committed His treasure to earthen vessels, to men and not to angels; and will He not strengthen us to meet every difficulty as it arises? We bear His high commission, and will He not enable us to discharge it? "Courage then, Ambassadors of the Most High! See if you can rise above the world, and tread upon her frownings with one foot, and her deceitful smilings with the other. There is honor enough in the employment to cause you to answer all opposition with disdain. Let it be as impossible to turn you from your integrity as the sun from its course. For that message

which you carry shall be glorious in the end : it shall conquer all opposing powers. When you seem exposed in your voyage to the fury of winds and waves, remember what you carry—*Cæsarem vehis, et fortunam ejus*; you can not suffer shipwreck.”*

And, moreover, when conscience whispers (as it will at times) that we have left much undone, and done much amiss—that we have committed many errors, and omitted many acts of duty—what comfort there is in the feeling that there is for us, as well as for our people, a cleansing Fountain, where we may go with all our failings, and where our ministerial, as well as our other sins, can be washed away.

Great indeed are the joys and encouragements of the faithful Christian Pastor. He may be weak in bodily powers; he may be limited in mental attainments; the lines may not have fallen unto him in pleasant places; without may oftentimes be fightings, and within fears; his hopes may be raised to-day, and cast down to-morrow. But still there is enough to cheer him on his way; and there is a blessing promised to every one whose heart's desire is to do the will of Him that sent him.

* Archbishop Leighton.

“He that intends,” says Bishop Burnet, “truly to preach the Gospel, and not himself; he that is more concerned to do good to others than to raise his own fame, or to procure a following to himself—that reads the Scriptures much, and meditates often upon them—that prays earnestly to God for direction in his labors, and for a blessing upon them—this man, so made, and so moulded, can not miscarry in his work. He shall have his crown, and his reward for his labors. And, to say all that can be said in one word with St. Paul, ‘He shall both save himself, and them that hear him.’”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PASTOR IN HIS HOME.

IT has been said of the Pastor that he has a *double self*. By virtue of his office, he is in one sense a public man. He has public functions to discharge. He prays in public, speaks in public, and is ever at the public summons of his people. His work, for the most part, lies abroad. But there is a home work, a closet work, an inner work, to be also carried on. And this, though unseen, will be surely felt all over his parish. Like the Clock upon the Church Tower, he is the great indicator, the regulator of men's spiritual course; so that they look up to him, and are guided by his movements. But how uncertain a guide will he prove—how false a director—unless the machinery within be in good order, unless his heart be right with God, unless there is a holy unction pervading his whole soul!

I will throw out a few hints in this closing chapter on the Clergyman's *more private life*.

First, as to his *Dwelling-place*. About the Parsonage there should be an air of neatness, sobriety, and cheerfulness; but nothing like extravagance or needless display, nothing that would invite remarks.

It may well be questioned whether *some* of our Parsonages of the present day are not of too pretending a character—whether they are not, in some cases, both too large and too luxurious. A modern writer observes: “The fault of the Vicarage is, that it is an imitation and epitome of the Hall. The arrangements, furniture, hours, habits, are copies of those of the Squire. It is the world on a small scale, not the house of a Prophet.” *

The Parson of the past generation erred in his fondness for field-sports. We justly cry out against it, and condemn it with open mouth. But let us take care lest luxury should prove *our* fault in the present age.

Any thing like grandeur and display about our houses is not only inconsistent with our character, who come not to be ministered unto but to minister, and hurtful to our own spirit as men of another world, but it will have this bad effect too—it will repel, rather than invite, our humble parishioners to come to

* The Rev. W. E. Heygate.

us. They will feel, that he who lives in so rich a mansion can hardly be accessible to such mean visitors. Whereas, at the dwelling of their Pastor they ought to be assured that a welcome ever awaits them; and that, whether they have some bodily want to be relieved, or some spiritual trial to disclose, or some kind counsel to seek, from *that* door at least no honest applicant will ever be dismissed as an intruder.

In all that concerns a Christian Pastor, there should be a natural simplicity and a cheerful sobriety. He should be simple in his manner, in his habits, in his mode of living.

In his little *Household*, too, order, punctuality, kind feeling, love, and peace should prevail. Many will be looking to what goes on there, and will take their tone from it. It is a city set upon a hill, and it should have no cause to flinch from the public eye.

A clergyman often complains that every thing done at the parsonage becomes the talk of the parish. But, as the writer just quoted observes: "Why should we complain that we are watched, we, and our houses, and families? Is it not a testimony to the honor and power of our office, as well as to the weight of our responsibilities? Is it not a means of doing

the greatest possible good, of preaching by deeds, always so much more efficacious than words? Suppose our table plain, our furniture and our persons simple—suppose our hours regular, and our habits quiet; our devotions frequent; our whole life self-denying; our distinct position testified by non-conformity to the world—what could we do better in this case than to throw open our doors, and let the people behold? The spectacle would be more persuasive than any sermon of words. ‘Ye know that from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons.’ What an appeal is here! If we could thus invite our people to see us, as we are at our homes, we might as well complain of their listening to our sermons, as of their desire to know how we live, and whether we are what we preach.”

The minister of a parish must be content to be watched, and to have his every action and movement scanned. Is he bold in assailing sin in public? Men will naturally ask if he is a follower after holiness himself—they will inquire what he is in his own private walk. Does he urge the necessity of prayer? The inquiry will naturally be made, whether he seems to be living a life of prayer himself.

Does he when in church recommend forbearance, meekness, gentleness, self-denial? Now, if it be known (and most assuredly the truth will ooze out) that his own temper is unsubdued—that he is sharp and hasty with his own family or with his servants—that he is self-indulgent, or a lover of pleasure—then will his words, however powerfully spoken, die away like mere gusts of wind, or like figures written upon the sand.

But it may well be asked: What minister can feel that his own private life is consistent, in every feature, with his public teaching? Alas! none of us. But the great question is: Are we honestly *desiring* so to live; and are we striving to bring our hearts into obedience to Christ? What is demanded of us is that we be *real*—not one thing in theory, and another in practice; not one thing before our congregations, and another when away from them. What we are in church—what we are in the cottages of our people, and by the bedside of the sick—that we must also be in our homes and in private, or our ministerial usefulness will be sadly marred.

But I now pass on to speak of the minister's *Study*. And should not this be indeed a

cherished spot? Here, if we would feed his people with food convenient for them, he must lay in ever-increasing stores of mental and spiritual food. I have shown in a former chapter that the Clergyman must be *a man of Reading*, or his ministrations will be poor and vapid. And I will run the risk of being charged with repeating myself, and urge once more upon my brethren in the ministry the indispensable necessity of storing up a growing fund of knowledge, and especially of nourishing their souls with that bread of life of which the Bible is the great storehouse. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Get your mind thoroughly imbued with Scripture truth; and you will be armed with the best, and surest, and most effectual weapons for your ministerial welfare.

The Clergyman's *Study* should be hallowed also by unceasing prayer. Why, it is often asked, is our ministry so fruitless? Why are the effects of our preaching so meagre? Why do so few become changed persons under our ministrations? Why is it that the drops from heaven come down so sparingly? It is because we want more of the Spirit's influence on ourselves and on our congregations. We want the windows of heaven to be opened, and a

blessing poured out. And yet God is willing; His arm is not shortened that it can not save, neither His ear heavy that it can not hear. What hinders then? Surely our own lack of faith. We apply not, we plead not, for a blessing: we have not, because we ask not. Oh! if there was more prayer going up from our closets—if the walls of our Studies bore witness to more earnest wrestling with God—most assuredly would a larger blessing accompany our ministrations.

I have already said that Prayer should be always connected with our Preparation for the Pulpit. But, alas! who among us gives sufficient time to this great and effectual branch of preparation? We are careful about our text, it may be—careful to introduce striking ideas; careful to clothe them in suitable language—but let us ever remember that if prayer is wanting, all our best efforts will be vain. “If,” said an eminent Minister, “we had but two hours in which to prepare for the pulpit, *one* should be spent in prayer.” This could not perhaps be carried out to the letter; but the spirit of it is worthy of our adoption.

But besides its bearing upon our pulpit work, Prayer is needed also for our general ministerial success. A blessing should be asked on

every occasion on which we exercise our ministry. Would it not be well if we were more in the habit of interceding for our people *individually* and by name? if we were to bring the wants of *each family*, one by one, before God? A kind of mental visitation of our flocks might periodically be carried on in our Studies; and, like the High Priest of old, we might bear them severally on our hearts before the Lord. This would be laboring for them in secret; and God would reward us openly.

But further, let us never forget that we, of all men, have the greatest need of Prayer, and Reading, and Meditation, for *ourselves*. Our temptations, our trials, our difficulties are immense; and our work far surpasses any powers of our own. Do we not then daily and hourly require a Father's love to pardon our errors, and a Father's strength to help us in our weakness? May it never be, that, whilst we are feeding our people, we ourselves should be left to pine in hunger, and to be parched with thirst—that, whilst we are keeping the vineyard of others, our own should run waste!

Truly, if any man should live a life of faith and holiness, of watchfulness and communion with God, it is the Christian Minister. He who calls men to heaven, and shows them the

way there—he whom God has honored with so blessed and holy an office as that of His Ambassador—should indeed live very near to God himself, and be much in His presence. He belongs to an order of men set apart for the highest work that human beings can be engaged in: then what manner of man ought he to be—how unworldly! how heavenly-minded! how separate from sin!

Hence it is not only what a clergyman is in public, but what he is in his private walk. This forms the true test of his character, and gives the true measure of his usefulness. If he is much *with* God in secret, he will be able to do much *for* God in public. It is to the Minister's study and closet we must go, if we would find the hidden springs of an effective ministry. There he must be carrying on a frequent intercourse with his Lord. There he must be often speaking *for* his people, and learning how to speak *to* them. There he must be gathering strength for his own soul, and drinking in those living waters with which he desires to see the souls of others refreshed.

Ah! why is there such poverty, such leanness, such miserable results, attending the labors of one man, whilst a rich and abundant

harvest crowns those of another? The latter may, as to intellectual gifts, be the least powerful of the two; he may be less learned, and have fewer outward advantages, than his brother; and yet a larger blessing may rest on his ministry. Why? Because *he prays more*; he walks more closely with his God; he loves the Scriptures more; religion is more a *reality* with him; and therefore there is a freshness, a holy unction, a heart-stirring power, in all he says—his words come from lips which God himself hath touched.

It was said of the early Christian Ministers, that the people took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And our people will soon discover whether or no we have been holding intercourse with our Lord, by the holy influence it has on our manner, our temper, and our life.

The Pastor's *Home!* we must not leave him there. That home may be sweet and peaceful. It may be endeared to him by a thousand ties. The hours spent there may for many years have been full of enjoyment and full of usefulness. But it is not his *resting-place*. He must never forget that he is but a stranger and a pilgrim here. His real, his true Home is above. He

must live on earth as one hastening onward to the many mansions of his Father's house.

And oh! how bright the prospect for one who is faithfully fulfilling his appointed task, and who is feeding the flock committed to him, "not of constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind!" His happy work will soon be exchanged for one far happier. When his labor here is over, he shall rest, and that forever, in his Saviour's bosom. Having ministered in the outer court, he shall be admitted within the veil. He shall receive from the Chief Shepherd a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

And now most truly may the writer of this Book say, that his own words condemn him, and fill him with shame. He is constrained, alas! to acknowledge that much which he has been recommending to others, and which he from his heart feels to be incumbent on a faithful Christian Minister, he has failed to practise himself. May he not then, without selfishness, ask those who have gone with him through these pages to bear him on their hearts before God, and to remember that none has greater need than he has of that abounding grace which can pardon our shortcomings and strengthen our weakness?

God grant that both he and his fellow-laborers in the Gospel may, in their own persons, increasingly approximate to that glowing description drawn by the poet Cowper of the Minister's sacred character :

“I would express him simple, grave, sincere :
In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain,
And plain in manner ; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture ; much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he fed
Might feel it too ; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.
Behold the picture ! Is it like ?”



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